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( SEE POWERFUL STORY ON FIRST PAGE. )

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**(No. 454)**

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# Through the Peril of the Night.

**A Thrilling Story of a Somnambulist and a Fortune of £20,000.**

**I.—The Temptation of Stephen Crawford.**

Sir James Crawford was dead—people whispered that it was almost by his own hand, for if he had not driven so madly, the accident would not have occurred which killed him on the spot, and which so severely injured his wife that if she did not die, she would be a cripple for life.

Still the verdict had been accidental death, even though there were a lot of strange rumours about, and now Lady Crawford lay looking up wearily at her stepson who stood at her bedside. He was not a pleasant-looking man. His skin was thickened and roughened, and his eyes, which shifted restlessly whenever one looked straight into them, were blood-shot with dissipation.

"I know what it means, Stephen," she said slowly. "But I do not fear death. It is not that that worries me, it is something else, Stephen."

Stephen stirred impatiently and swore under his breath. He had a hatred of worry of any kind, and he had surely had enough lately to send him into his grave.

He looked round the great, luxurious room at the thick carpets and heavy hangings and signs of wealth that were everywhere about, and remembered what they were already saying of his father, that his death had been well-timed, that another week or two would have seen him in the dock, a branded criminal and a bankrupt.

Stephen shivered a little and looked round desperately. He was in no mood to be lectured, and he supposed it *was* a lecture he was going to have—something about his drinking and card-playing of course.

Lady Crawford was looking at him with wide, pathetic eyes.

"You'll listen to me, Stephen? It is hard for me to have to tell it—oh, have a little pity on me, Stephen, and help me now that I am dying."

Help her? Stephen looked down with sudden interest. Then it was not a lecture after all.

"Well?" he said.

Lady Crawford sighed. Stephen was his father's son—hard, cold, and cruel, and she set her teeth as if the courage which she had tried to summon before when Sir James was alive might fail her even now. She looked up uneasily.

"Stephen, I must tell you," she cried, "I've tried often and often to tell your father, but I could not. He frightened me. But he is dead now and I am dying. I must unbosom myself to someone. I must speak before I die."

She tried to draw herself closer to the edge of the bed—closer to Stephen, and failed, and lay back helplessly. Stephen looked at her without any pity or tenderness in his face. He was hard, as his father had been before him, and it was only desperation, now that she was so close to death, that made her go on.

"I've tried to love you as though you were my own son," she gasped breathlessly, "and because of that I ask you to help me now. You promise, Stephen?"

He bit his lips impatiently.

"Well?" he said. "Go on."

It was hard to go on. Lady Crawford's lips quivered and set, and she made another effort.

"I could only come to you," she said. "You are almost my son. I married Sir James when you were six years old, and you scarcely knew another mother, and I—I was going to say I have known no other child, but it is that that I have to tell you, Stephen."

Her voice sank and Stephen looked up with almost a start.

"Go on," he cried roughly.

"It is a confession," she gasped, "that I could never make to your father. Stephen, I've got a child—a little girl—at Worlden Hill."

Stephen started in earnest.

"A child," he cried, "at Worlden? What on earth do you mean?"

Lady Crawford's fingers clutched desperately at the counterpane.

"My little child," she whispered. "I was married before I met Sir James. He was a good man—a good man, Stephen, but poor, and when he died—we had so little to eat—Lucy and I—that we nearly died too."

She closed her eyes to shut out Stephen's hard face. Her face seemed white as the sheet itself, and it required all her courage to speak even now.

"It was terrible," she went on, breathing heavily. "I

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tried to get a living by singing, and that is how I met your father—at an 'At Home' we met often—he didn't know that I had a child—I never told him—he would not have married me if he had known, and Lucy was a delicate girl and almost starving, and I married Sir James for her sake.

"I found a nurse and put her in her hands—I always paid her well. Her name is Martha Steadwell, and she lives at Worlden."

Stephen looked aghast. Worlden was the place where his father's ironworks were.

"How on earth did you prevent anyone knowing it?" he asked.

"It was not difficult," Lady Crawford answered. "When I handed over the child it was dark and I wore a veil and Martha did not know me. I have seen her many times since, and she has not recognised me. I have seen Lucy too—my poor little Lucy! Stephen, what I want you to do is this—to go to Worlden and fetch her to me before I die? You'll do it, Stephen? Oh, you will, you will; you need not be ashamed of her. She has been well educated, and she is a good, dear little soul, and she will be rich. She will not be dependent on you, I have seen to that. When we married, your father settled twenty thousand pounds on me. I have never touched it, and the interest has been accumulating all these years—twenty years—Stephen, and I have left it all to Lucy. You will not want it. The solicitor who pays Martha has my will, and he will see to everything—you will have no trouble only—I want you to fetch her to me before I die."

A change had come over Stephen's face. There was a sullen light in his eyes and his lips looked thin and cruel.

Twenty thousand pounds! And in a week or two when his father's affairs were wound up he would be almost penniless! He ground his teeth. The money that Lady Crawford was leaving to this girl ought to belong to him—it *would* belong to him if she died—it *should* belong to him. Twenty thousand pounds all going to a chit of a black-country girl—an ignorant girl, of course—a little fool who had never dreamt of such a sum in her life, perhaps, and if she were dead the money would be his! Bah! It was maddening.

He bent over Lady Crawford, and, with a strange glimmer in his eyes, promised he would go to Worlden and bring back her daughter.

Lady Crawford put her hand under her pillow and drew out a letter.

"I have written to her," she said faintly. "This will tell her everything. And oh, thank you, Stephen—thank you, and bless you."

Stephen turned away with his face set and his eyes dark. He was wondering how he could get hold of Lucy's money.

## II.—A Miracle in the Darkness.

"Lucy, Lucy, don't tell me that—don't say no again. Darling, you can't mean it?"

Lucy lifted her face—such a girlish, pretty face, to the man who stood holding her hands in his. He was young, with a fresh, open face, and the handsomest pair of eyes in the county.

"Oh, don't, Harry," she cried. "Don't tempt me. I couldn't. I'd rather be dead."

His face whitened.

"Rather be dead than marry me?" he cried.

"Oh, you know what I mean," Lucy said hastily. "You know I couldn't marry you. You're the son of a gentleman—you live in a Hall that has been owned by your family for hundreds of years, and I'm only a poor girl—a—a—shameful girl perhaps," her voice broke, "for I don't know, and Martha doesn't know, who my mother and father were."

Harry Linton went very close to her.

"My darling, I don't care for that," he cried. "I've not got much to boast of. We're as poor as rooks, and I don't care what you are, and if you'll only marry me——"

She stepped back from him.

"Don't—don't say it again," she cried. "I can't. No no, Harry, I never could."

He caught her hand in his, and drew her to him again.

"But if I were nobody you would?" he asked. "If I were not Harry Linton of the Hall, but a clerk or a nail-maker in the Crawford Iron Works you would, eh?"

A sob choked in her throat.

"Oh, if you were!" she cried.

He looked at her long and steadily.

"Lucy, I can't give you up," he cried. "I won't!"

She wrenched her hand free.

"Don't speak of it again!" she said; "and now I must go. Martha's got a new lodger—a man from London—and I must go and help her."

"A man? What's he like? Not young, or nice looking?"

"I—I don't know. I think he's young. But he's not nice-looking. Oh, no, he's horrid looking, and he drinks!"

She shivered a little; she did not know why, except that the stranger had had a strange effect upon her. His eyes had frightened her. She looked down the miserable black-country street, with its dirty little houses huddled close together, and then back at Harry.

"Somehow, I'm frightened of him!" she cried suddenly. "I don't know why—it's stupid, of course, but I—I don't like him."

She drew a deep breath.

"Oh, it seems almost as if he hated me and wished me ill!" she cried.

Harry looked at her thoughtfully. An idea had occurred to him, and he was wondering how it would work.

"He shan't hurt you, Lou," he said. "I—I'll take care of you, and, darling, you'll trust me always, won't you, whatever happens?"

She looked at him wonderingly.

"Of course," she said. "You know I will."

Harry said nothing more, but his handsome face had a smile upon it as they walked up the narrow entry to the back of the house in which Lucy and Martha lived.

It was only a small house like the others in the straggling, dirty street, but it did not look like the others. It looked cleaner, sprucer, and the coal dust which seemed to linger on the steps and sills of the rest seemed to have escaped this.

It was getting dusk, and heavy shadows hung about the narrow yard as they passed into it. Harry caught Lucy's arm, and then started, for as he did so, something shot from the roof and clattered at their feet.

Lucy gave a little cry, and Harry looked down with his face grown white. A slate from the roof! An inch nearer and it would have killed her.

She shuddered and stood quite still, looking into Harry's face. A sudden cold terror crept into her heart, and a vision of the lodger's face flashed for a moment between her and Harry.

Harry caught her to him.

"Lou! Lou!" he cried.

She looked up.

"It—it wasn't an accident!" she breathed. "It was done on purpose. Oh, Harry, I'm afraid—I'm afraid!"

Harry bent his head in reply, but before he could speak the door behind them had opened and a face peered out.

It was an ugly, menacing face that fell back startled at the sight of Harry. The next instant, however, he had recovered himself and come forward.

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"The new lodger," Lucy whispered nervously, and as he passed out she saw his eyes on Harry's face, and she saw something ugly and desperate and savage flash into them, and her heart stood still.

She held her breath for a moment, until the sound of his footsteps had died away, and then turned to Harry.

"Oh, he means ill to us," she cried. "He looked at you as if—as if he would have liked to murder you!"

Harry laughed.

"You foolish baby!" he cried. "Why on earth should he mean ill to me? I never saw him before in my life."

Lucy shook her head.

"I don't know—I don't know!" she cried, "but he means ill to me—to you and me! He means ill to us both!"

Harry laughed again, and tried to drive the foolish idea from her head, but it was no use—it stuck there, and during the next two days it seemed almost as if she were right, that the man did mean some evil after all, for she began to meet with curious accidents, and always the new lodger was somewhere in the neighbourhood. Twice she fell downstairs, twice she met with an accident in the street, and at last Harry began to be thoroughly alarmed. He determined to watch this stranger and find out something about him, and the thought that had been vaguely in his mind a day or two before took shape.

"I'm going away, Lou," he said abruptly. "I don't know how long for, but it may be some time. So it will be good-bye to-night."

She looked up at him with her heart sinking, but with a sudden sense of relief too.

"I—I'm almost glad," she said, "for that man would murder you if he could. I'm sure of it. I saw him look at you again just now, and he means ill—I know he means ill—and—and perhaps it will be good for you to go away for a bit."

Harry laughed, as he had laughed before, and bid her good-bye. He said nothing more about coming back, he said nothing more about making her his wife, and though she felt that she could never be that, yet her heart was heavy as she turned back into the house. If only she could have told him how she loved him! If only there had not been that uncertainty about her birth! If only she had been his equal how different things might have been!

How different! She never dreamt what a difference his going away would make to her! She never dreamt that she would miss him so!

She missed him every hour of the day, and when the post brought her no news of him her heart grew sick with disappointment. Yet, after all, what had she expected? She had refused him. She knew she could never be his wife, and surely it was better that she should not see him again?

All the same her face grew very white, and Martha looked at her in alarm.

"It's that man upstairs as has brought us bad luck!" she said; "and his drinking and mad ways is frightening you, I can see. I wish I'd let the rooms to that nice young man as called two days ago. He'd got a wig on, I'm certain, but he was respectable, and it was a great pity I had to send him to Mrs. Neal opposite. I shall turn this drunken wretch out. He gets worse. That's my firm belief."

He did; and the ugly fear settled at Lucy's heart, and no news, no message came from Harry. He had gone, and though she did not know why, she felt, that somehow, she was at the mercy of the man upstairs.

"I'd give my 'ead if we could change him for a lodger like Mrs. Neal's!" Martha cried. "He just sits quiet all day—writing or summat, and isn't a bit o' trouble."

"He's only been there two days," said Lucy, "and he may—Oh, hark, Martha! he frightens me!"

The man upstairs were tramping up and down muttering to himself. His heavy feet treading the floor sounded terrible in the little sitting-room. Lucy got up with a shiver.

"Oh, Martha, he frightens me!" she said. "Let's go to bed."

Martha dragged herself up from her chair, and Lucy crept upstairs silently on tip-toe, and ran quickly past the lodger's room.

As she went, his voice, hoarse and unsteady, came out to her, and for a moment she stood still. It could have been only fancy, but for a moment she thought he was repeating Harry's name!

It surely could have been only fancy, but the threat in his voice sent her nerves tingling with horror and turned her blood cold.

Harry! And he had gone away abruptly and without a word! What did it mean?

It could mean nothing of course, and yet, as she undressed, there was with her the ugly fear that something would happen to him; that, for some strange reason, which she could not understand, the lodger hated him and had done him harm. It was foolish, of course, to imagine such things, and she tried to shake off the feeling, but it would not go, and she put out her light and drew up the blind with it still upon her.

She looked across the street, at the silent houses, at the blank, dark windows, and as she looked she gave a start, for she almost fancied for a moment that she saw Harry's face looking back at her from Mrs. Neal's house!

It was only a trick of the nerves, of course, and she drew back shivering and crept into bed. She lay trembling under the clothes, her heart beating heavily, the terror strong upon her.

When she fell asleep at last it was to dream wildly and horribly, and always of some danger that threatened Harry.

She sat up hurriedly at last. Surely she had heard him call her? Surely she had heard his voice? She could not be mistaken!

She slipped out of bed—still asleep—and stood for a moment in the centre of the room. She stretched out her hands and turned slowly towards the door. Her eyes, wide open, saw nothing, but she went steadily across and turned the handle.

Outside the landing lay in pitch darkness, but she did not hesitate. She was fast asleep; but in her sleep she could hear Harry calling her, and she went steadily towards him.

But she went a strange way. The voice she heard in her sleep seemed to lead her to a perilous path, for she turned away from the stairs, the head of which lay close to the lodger's door, towards a ladder that led to the roof.

She mounted it steadily—her bare feet did not falter—and pushed open the trap door.

The cold night air blew through on to her face and drifted through her long, dark hair that curled about her shoulders, but it did not wake her, and she went on.

It was a strange path to choose, but perhaps her brain acted unconsciously, for she disappeared through the trap door. A door below opened, and the lodger crept out.

He stole on tip-toe towards her room. He swayed drunkenly as he went, and his eyes, glazed and bright, saw nothing, although he was wide awake.

He drew a sharp breath as he pushed open the door, and brought the knife he carried a little closer to his side.

A moment later he came out again, leaving the knife stuck fiercely through the bedclothes on the spot where Lucy had been lying a short time before.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Mrs. Neal's lodger sat at the window opposite as he had sat for the past hour.

He was staring across the street at Lucy's room—staring as

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though the white figure he had seen draw up the blind an hour ago might reappear.

He was getting stiff when something—a sudden flutter of white on the flat roof startled him. He peered forward sharply. Something was moving along the leads—he could not see clearly what it was, and he rose to his feet and pushed open the window.

It was something white. That much he could see. And then suddenly he gave a startled exclamation. It was a woman!

He leant forward breathlessly. She was standing upright now—a slight figure in a soft, white gown, standing upright and still on the treacherous tiles—standing as unconsciously as if she had been on the flat pavement.

His heart stood still and stopped beating for a moment, and he leant on the window sill, motionless with horror, waiting for what would happen.

That she would fall headlong in a moment seemed a certainty, and a strange sickness overcame him. A girl—a young girl, too, she looked, but he could not see clearly for a moment. Then slowly she turned until she stood with her face towards him, and then suddenly the red flare of one of the black-country furnaces flashed up and threw the light on her face, and he gave a hoarse cry.

Lucy!

For a moment everything went black before him. For a moment the dark sky studded with stars, the thick smoke and the red fires that leapt day and night from the furnace chimneys swam hideous and confused before him. Then he realised that she was walking in her sleep, and he gripped the window sill with both his hands and set his teeth with all his will bent to hers—to send her to safety by the force of it if such a thing were possible.

It was the only thing to do—to stand there and watch and wait. He dared not lose sight of her. He dared not move. And yet—to see her there, in peril of her life, seemed to send him near to madness.

He ground his teeth and held his breath when she moved at last, and his heart leapt into his mouth when he saw her move slowly towards the edge of the roof and balance herself upon the narrow coping.

Was his will no good? Could he not drive her below?

He waited, and then a hoarse sob broke from his throat; for instead of going below she was making her way back along the roof towards a telegraph post which stood upright against it. In another moment she would be out of his sight—in another moment she would be where his eyes could not follow her, and the sickness and giddiness swept over him again.

Then suddenly he started. Did he see aright? She was mounting the pole—creeping up to the wires that stretched away from it across the dark roofs. God help them both, what did she mean to do?

He watched her breathlessly. She had reached the top, her small fingers had gripped the outstretching bars, and Good Heavens! she had mounted the wires—had balanced herself, and was swinging to and fro upon them—was starting to walk across them.

God help her! His lips moved, but no sound came from them.

For a moment it seemed to him that it was a horrible, hideous nightmare, and he stared up with his face growing white and strained as she came steadily on.

She did not falter. It was wonderful how calmly she came. In her sleep she glided silently over the housetops—over the smutty roofs, over the street towards the next post that stood at the corner of Mrs. Neal's house. The wires swayed wildly backwards and forwards, in and out, but a strange power guided her that night, for she did not slip and the wires held her safely.

As she came nearer the man watching her drew a heavy, hoarse breath, and rousing himself sharply, turned and ran from the room, making for the trap-door in the roof, intent only on one thing—on reaching her when she got to the post on Mrs. Neal's roof.

He rushed out and leapt up the ladder. His breath seemed to fail him, and an odd feeling of faintness came over him as he reached the leads and crept along them, and then once more the sob broke from his throat.

He was just in time! She came on, swaying and swinging on the wires, her face white, her eyes now half closed, and her thick, dark hair curling gloriously about her shoulders.

She came on by a miracle, and the man leant forward.

His shaking fingers touched the hem of her nightdress.

He looked up breathlessly, and then—he was just in time. She swayed suddenly—a word fell from her lips, and the next instant she was in his arms, and he was sobbing over her and dragging her slowly down the ladder to the landing below.

She opened her eyes with a start and a cry of dismay, and for a moment the old fear seized her. Then she saw that the man was a stranger, and she looked round, bewildered, at the unfamiliar room.

"I—I—oh, where am I?" she began, and then she started again, for the stranger had wrapped something round her, was holding her in his arms with his face close to hers, was pulling off his wig and his beard.

She started up, and her heart gave a leap.

"*Harry!*" she cried.

* * * * * * *

A little later they found the man they had known as Martha's lodger huddled in his room, staring wildly at something unseen that threatened him, and when Lucy confronted him he fell back from her, shouting that he had killed her! He was removed to an asylum, declaring that the dead had come to life, and a few weeks later he died, a raving lunatic.

But before that they had found in his pocket a letter addressed to Lucy, and when she read it her last scruple about marrying Harry vanished. She had found her mother!

It was Harry who took her to London, and put her in the dying woman's arms, and it was Harry who, later on, promised solemnly to love, cherish, and honour her, and who has since faithfully done so.

As for Lucy, she has amongst her treasures a wig and a beard. They remind her of a time when her husband was "Mrs. Neal's lodger," and when he saw her pass through a strange and terrible peril of the night. That he saved her from death twice that night she always declares, for she had heard him calling her in her sleep, and if it had not been for that she would never have got up as she did, and Stephen would have killed her as he had intended to as she lay in bed.

That was so; and Harry has never ceased to be thankful that he disguised himself in order to watch over the girl he loved.

But that night left a grey hair or two amongst his black ones.

**Annie O. Tibbits**

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# A Frustrated Plot.

## A Pretty Little Narrative of a Girl's Love.

A SUNBEAM that had lost its way in the golden tangle of the laburnum suddenly shone upon a girl's fair head. There was a smell of fresh-turned earth, mingled with the delicate scent of Spring; and the swaying figure in the blue print gown, tip-toeing for a branch of pale pink apple-blossom, made one think of wild hyacinth under a rose-flushed sky.

The gate clicked and the colour deepened in her cheeks. The apple blossom seemed more difficult than ever to obtain. Perhaps she knew that the sunshine was turning her hair to gold and that the breeze, scattering the petals upon her upturned face, was playing such lover-like tricks as would drive a man wild with envy. But she was innocence itself with her little start of surprise when Ted Gardiner spoke.

"It was," he suggested, "an evening made for a ramble in the fields."

"Well, if Ted would wait until she changed her gown?" with a glance at her skirts and another at his admiring eyes.

But he shook his head. "It's the one I like to see you wear better than any," he told her.

"Bad taste," she answered, wrinkling her forehead.

"Maybe, but it's the gown you wore the day——"

"The day you met me at the picnic and behaved so badly," she returned. "Never took notice of the vicar, his wife, or anyone else for that matter."

"Well, you were there—that was enough for me."

Elsie Dent lowered her eyes reprovingly.

"You know you promised not to talk in that way, Ted; at any rate, until father is willing."

"Leave your father out of the question for to-night, Elsie. I have much to say."

By this time they had left the garden, and, skirting the meadow where the farmer and his men were still at work, walked towards Norton Woods, a mile or so from the old homestead, where for generations past a Dent had lived.

"Your father won't have anything to say to me, Elsie, until I can show him a nest-egg, a hundred or two in the bank or some adequate provision for the future. I don't say but what he's right; a man should not marry until he can keep his wife in comfort. But he won't even hear of our being engaged."

"I told you so, Ted. I warned you that it was no good to speak."

"All the same, Elsie, I mean to make him take me for a son-in-law. But to do that I must have money, and to get that I must go to London. To tell the truth, Miles Foster offered to get me a berth at Sheldon's, the big horse dealers, the last time he was down here. I should have to 'try' the nags, show 'em off, you know, and put 'em through their paces. It would suit me down to the ground, and Miles says I should get well paid."

London might have been as far away as Texas by the distress displayed by Elsie at the notion of Ted's going there. It would be impossible for her to endure life with any degree of comfort, let alone happiness, with Ted in London. Besides, people said queer things about Miles Foster, no good would come of anything *he* recommended, she was sure.

The young fellow listened to all her objections, and soothed, or tried to soothe, her grief. But his determination remained unshaken. He wanted Elsie, but without money he could not have her. Therefore it was only common sense to seize the opportunity Foster had put in his way. He would go to London and take Sheldon's berth, and come back prosperous and triumphant like the good youth in the fairy tales.

"Cheer up, Elsie. I'll soon be back. Come, dry your eyes and let me see the bright face that I love so well."

"You'll often write, Ted?"

"Of course I shall. Give me a kiss and say 'Good-bye.' You'll be faithful to me, Elsie?"

"You know *that*, Ted."

He nodded, and caught her in his arms.

The next minute he strode off quickly—almost cheerfully, the girl thought. Well, perhaps she could understand it. The village was small, the interests petty, the life dull. In London there would be things to see; fresh people to talk to. She sighed regretfully at the fate that sends men out into the world to work, and keeps women in the home to make beds, darn socks, and weep when there's a spare five minutes.

It was quite as well for Elsie that those five minutes were few and far between. At Dent Farm there was much to do, both in the house and diary, and few hands to do it. Farmer Dent was a warm man, so far as money went, but an uncommon close one. To save a penny he would expend a vast amount of energy, and he expected others to do likewise. Elsie was hard at it all day long. An hour or two in the evening was all the time she had to herself.

Some month or two after Ted's departure she found even this little leisure threatened. Of all things in the world, her father announced his intention of taking a farm pupil!

He advertised to that effect in the local paper, and had received a favourable reply. In less than a week the thing was settled, and the beginning of October Ralph Houghton was an inmate of Dent Farm.

All the day he studied agriculture, gazing at crops with great determination if little energy. And in the evening he expected Elsie to amuse him.

At first she resented his intrusion, but after a time she grew to like the quiet, self-contained young fellow. He lent her books, taught her games, and was so unfailingly cheerful and attentive that Elsie had but little time in which to grieve for Ted.

That young man was doing very well. He had proved invaluable to Sheldon's, and had had more than one offer from

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a rival firm. He hoped to run down and see Elsie at Christmas. Ralph Houghton had heard of Ted through village gossip, and professed great interest in his prospects. Elsie was drawn to make a confidant of him, and discussed her plans and hopes for the future very fully.

Just about this time Miles Foster reappeared in the village. The redoubtable Miles was a sharp, wizened little man, with a tongue like vinegar and a temper hot as pepper. He had been a jockey in the days of his youth, but various malpractices had resulted in his being warned off the turf. Since then his mode of life had been a mystery. He came back to the village occasionally, and put up at the Crown Inn, where he was both liked and feared.

The more respectable part of the community fought shy of the ex-jockey, and it was a vexation to Elsie that Ted should have obtained his situation through such a channel.

Ralph Houghton, however, professed himself much amused at Miles; the man was an oddity, he declared, and worth studying. Elsie marvelled at his taste, but discreetly held her tongue.

One evening she came across the two, Houghton and Miles, in close conversation. She passed them in the woods, bare and leafless now, and giving little cover. The strangely-assorted pair to all appearances were not on the best of terms.

Houghton, his face set in an ugly and determined fashion, leant against a tree. Foster, giving full play to his peppery temper, was snarling out sharp sayings at a little distance.

"A hundred pounds I'll pay you if the job comes off, and not a penny more," said Houghton.

"What, me take a sum like that?" replied the other. "You're too big for your boots, mister, and that's a fact. I won't lend a finger under two hundred and fifty pounds, and you can't play the game without me. At a word from me the young man would take fright and warn the boss."

Houghton tightened his lips.

"A hundred is my price; take it or leave it."

"Think what it will mean to you if the job comes off. You'll be a millionaire. I tell you the nag is the fastest thing I've ever seen. He's bound to win, unless——"

He stopped and grinned significantly. "If the horse doesn't start you'll rake in thousands. If we nobble the man and doctor the nag you'll be on velvet."

"And if it *doesn't* I shall be—somewhere else," said Houghton grimly.

The ex-jockey laughed. "Stone Jug's not a nice place, I grant you, mister, but there's no fear of your being put away if you'll act straight with your pals. Come, I'll meet you half way. Give me fifty quid on the nail and the other fifty shall stand over."

"Very well, you shall have the money to-night. When do you say the young man goes to the stables?"

"Next week."

"And the nag?"

"Arrives soon after him. We've six months to work the job in, mister, and I bet my life we shall succeed. A man'll do a lot for money when he has a pretty sweetheart whom he wants to make his wife."

Houghton nodded.

"I'll see you this evening at the Crown, Foster," he said, and the two men separated.

Elsie felt considerably puzzled at this conversation. That some evil was afoot she felt sure, though it was difficult to suspect Houghton of underhand dealings.

On arriving home a more pleasurable matter took her attention. She found a letter from Ted, announcing his return to the neighbourhood. A gentleman had engaged him to act as trainer at some small stables close to Norton. The salary was fair, the work congenial, above all he would be near his darling Elsie.

The girl was too delighted with the news to immediately connect it with the conversation she had overheard. Later, however, she wondered if Ted would by any chance be the young man referred to.

When she learnt that her lover had been specially engaged to look after a two-year-old, of whom great things were expected, and who was entered for the next year's Derby, she felt persuaded that that was the case.

There was, she feared, a plot on foot to injure both Ted and his charge. But of the nature of the plot she could not form a notion.

* * * * *

For the next three months things went smoothly both with Ted and Elsie. Since the former had been engaged by Sir Charles Denvers, Farmer Dent had modified his views concerning him, and the young people met with his consent.

Elsie had not told her lover of the conversation she had overheard between Miles and Houghton. The former had disappeared from the neighbourhood, and Houghton was apparently engrossed in agriculture. It seemed best to let things be; Ted had a fiery temper, the chances were that if she told him her suspicions he would have taxed Houghton then and there. This would have brought about a scene and made everyone uncomfortable. She wanted nothing to disturb her father's friendly attitude to Ted.

Christmas came and went, bringing good cheer to Norton generally, and an extra share of happiness to Elsie. Sir Charles had expressed his satisfaction with Ted and raised his salary. The young man was saving and steady. It seemed as if his marriage with Elsie was not so far off after all.

And then in the midst of their planning fell a bolt from the blue; Ralph Houghton asked Farmer Dent for his daughter Elsie! The farmer, as might have been expected, listened to his suit. Houghton, to all appearance, was a wealthy man, and Dent loved and reverenced wealth.

To make a long story short, Ted was told to go, and forbidden to show his face again as Elsie's suitor unless he brought two hundred pounds—that being the sum Houghton had promised to give the astute Dent should he win Elsie for his wife.

It was just about this time that Miles Foster reappeared, and that Sir Charles charged Ted to look after Gladiator, the two-year-old referred to, even more carefully than before.

"It's a great responsibility," the young trainer confided to his sweetheart at one of their stolen interviews. "I don't mean the care of the horse exactly, but the fear that some harm may come to him while under my charge. You see Gladiator is entered for the Derby. He's a flyer and will carry all before him. Sir Charles stands to make a pot of money over him. If he wins, the bookies will be hard hit indeed!

"Now, there's a combine against Gladiator," he went on; "that is to say, a lot of money's being laid against him. What I fear is that somehow or other the horse will be got at—doctored, you know, and injured so that he can't start for the race. It will be ruin for me if anything happens to Gladiator. Sir Charles would never forgive me."

"Keep watch and ward over him, Ted," said Elsie excitedly, her mind recalling Houghton's conversation. "We've got enemies, you and I. There are those who would like to harm us. For Heaven's sake, don't lose sight of Gladiator for a moment!"

So impressed was Elsie with the sense of threatened danger that she begged her lover not to leave the stables unless actually compelled. She would contrive to slip over to see him there, he must not risk anything by meeting her elsewhere.

Still, however, she did not tell him of her suspicions in regard to Houghton. The time for that, she thought, had passed. There was enough ill-feeling as it was between the two young men.

Houghton was an attentive but by no means an annoying suitor. He had taken Elsie's somewhat furious rejection

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of his proposal in good part, merely observing that she might possibly alter her determination.

"Never!" she said defiantly, "so far as *he* was concerned."

The weeks slipped quickly by, Elsie still worried and anxious about Gladiator; Ted tired by his constant watching and somewhat gloomy in consequence.

One Thursday afternoon Elsie received a pencilled scrawl urging her to come at once to the stables. Full of foreboding she obeyed the summons.

She found Ted in a terrible condition of excitement. He spoke thickly, and was not at all like himself—almost as if he had been drinking. He poured out an incoherent statement as to Sir Charles' ingratitude, and the world's injustice.

"I took no more than a glass of ale, Elsie, at the Crown—uncommon bitter it was too. It made me feel a bit queer, somehow, and I got back here as soon as possible. The master had just arrived, and he stormed at me like a pickpocket; vowed I was a drunken vagabond, and that he'd a good mind to dismiss me then and there. You know whether or not I've done my duty to Sir Charles and the horse? Hardly a wink of sleep I've had this month past for anxiety and worry. I've not trusted one of the stable boys to so much as feed Gladiator without I stood by, and now I'm abused for my pains because I took a glass of ale."

"Sure it was only one, Ted?"

"I swear it. You can ask Foster, he was with me at the Crown."

"Ted, don't think me foolish, but—but——" she paused. "Do you think Foster drugged the beer?"

"Now what on earth should he do that for? Poor old Miles has been a good friend to me. A better friend than Sir Charles, anyway. Look here, Elsie, you and I have waited long enough. We must get married. Your father wants £200, and I've a mind to get it. Why am I to wear myself to death looking after Gladiator? I won't do it any more. I'll go to sleep to-night and"—he looked mysterious—"if anything should happen to him before the morning I shan't be any the wiser, and"—he nodded—"I shall have——"

"No, no, Ted, you mustn't say it!" screamed the girl, putting her hand over his mouth. "You can't know what you're doing. You must be *mad*. Go and lie down and get some sleep, and I'll watch here for the next hour or two. Don't argue"—with a stamp of her foot—"do as I tell you, or goodness knows what may be the consequences!"

Ted finally allowed himself to be persuaded, and retired to rest. Elsie took up her position in the stables, perched on a box in Gladiator's comfortable stall. The Danvers' establishment was but a small one. Ted, a young groom, and two boys comprised the staff. There were two other nags besides Gladiator, neither of much account, but very useful for trial purposes. Sir Charles was not a rich man, unlucky speculations on the turf had indeed made him comparatively a poor one. He looked to Gladiator to redeem his fortunes.

Ted reappeared after some hours' repose, much refreshed, and considerably quieter. He had lost the strange excited look which had so alarmed Elsie, and seemed much ashamed of the wild things he had said.

**One evening she came across the two, Houghton and Miles, in close conversation. The strangely-assorted pair, to all appearances, were not on the best of terms.**

Elsie made no reference to what had passed until just before she left. Then resting her hand on her sweetheart's shoulder, she said softly: "You'll look after Gladiator, Ted?"

"On my word!" he answered slowly, "and—I'll not be seeing Foster till after Monday, Elsie."

The assurance gave her comfort. Monday was the day on which Gladiator would leave the stables for Epsom.

Friday and Saturday were anxious days for Elsie. She sent a cheering note to Ted each morning, but he replied in a despondent vein. He had reason to suspect the groom of designs upon Gladiator, and had incontinently dismissed him. The man was insolent, and had hung about the yard all day in conversation with the boys. The news came from London that the odds against Gladiator were increasing daily. Sir Charles had wired Ted that he was arriving at The Firs, a country house near Norton, on the Sunday; until then the young fellow had the responsiblity alone.

Sunday morning Houghton announced that he was going away for a day or two and did not expect to return till Tuesday. After he had gone Farmer Dent decided to go over to his sister's, some few miles away. Elsie was left alone.

She rushed through her household duties and arrived in the stables early in the afternoon. Ted was looking ill and fagged, and feeling very miserable.

"I can't keep it up much longer," he said. "I'm about done up. I wrote to Sir Charles and told him I was worried about Gladiator, and he wired back saying I was a fool! No one could harm the horse if I took proper precautions. On top

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of that I get a note from him to-day sent from The Firs, where he arrived last night. Read it, Elsie, and say what you think."

"Bring Gladiator over here this evening about ten. Am anxious," said the note.

"It will knock the horse up a bit, won't it, Ted? It's a matter of five miles to The Firs."

"Won't do him any good. Still the master knows what he's about. It will give me a night's sleep, anyway. I tell you what, Elsie, this place has got on my nerves. I suggest that I walk home with you, put Gladiator in the farm stables for an hour, and go on later to Sir Charles."

Elsie thought it a very good suggestion, and presently the two set out, Ted leading Gladiator with all the care he would have given to a child. They went by slow degrees, the horse must not get tired, so it wanted a quarter to nine when Dent Farm was reached.

The horse was put up in the old stables, Houghton's chestnut being turned into the field to give the favourite more room. With a sigh of relief, Ted followed his sweetheart into the comfortable kitchen.

"When do you expect your father, Elsie?"

"Not till the morning, Ted, and Houghton has gone to London for a couple of days. It's quite like old times, you and I sitting here together."

Ted responded in a suitable and lover-like manner. Presently Elsie went upstairs to put on, with girlish vanity, a more becoming blouse. As she stood before the glass admiring her pretty face and dainty figure she fancied she heard footsteps, stealthy, muffled, creeping down the passage leading to her room. She felt frightened, and moved towards the door. Just as she clenched the handle, the key was turned upon the other side!

**In another minute Houghton's chestnut had taken Gladiator's place in the empty stable.**

Someone had locked her in the room!

Her first impulse was to scream, then she remembered that Hannah, the domestic help, was not in the house, nor any of the farm hands. Ted could not hear her from the kitchen. It was more than probable that the thief—for surely a thief it must be—would come in contact with her sweetheart soon enough without her intervention.

The thought brought with it a vivid sense of apprehension for her lover. Somehow she must get to him, it was maddening to stay there locked up while he was in danger. She threw open her window, the branches of an apple tree growing close to the house swayed towards her.

As a young girl she had often clambered to the ground down that very tree. Why not now?

A minute later, breathless and excited, she had put her project into execution, and stood in safety on the ground.

The kitchen window was closed, the curtains tightly drawn; not a sound to be heard, not so much as a ray of light to be seen. The front door was bolted. Creeping to the back of the house she found the door of the dairy left ajar.

On tiptoe she entered, passing softly down the passage till she reached the store room, which led into the kitchen. The door between the two rooms was ajar—she could see and hear all that passed.

Ted was standing on one side of the table. Facing him, an ugly look in his eyes, and a look of determination in his square, strong figure, was Ralph Houghton. Miles Foster watched them both from a seat by the window.

"You may just as well listen to reason, Gardiner," said the "farm pupil." "You are absolutely cornered. I've got you tight. Shout if you like but it won't do you any good. There's no one to hear but Elsie, and she's locked up in her bedroom. If any of the neighbours should look in my tale's ready. I found you here in the farmer's absence, against his express commands. As for fighting your way out—we are two to one"—he glanced at the ex-jockey, "and—well——" he paused, and lifted a revolver significantly. "I'm in dead earnest, Gardiner, and at the worst I wouldn't hesitate to put a bullet through you."

"What do you want with me?" said Ted sullenly.

Houghton paused.

"I want you to give Gladiator a bran mash," he said; "specially flavoured."

"You blackguard," was the answer; "I'll see you hanged first."

Houghton smiled.

"You'd much better listen to reason," he said once more. "In any case you've cooked your goose with Sir Charles. He isn't likely to keep a man in his employ who'd walk a Derby favourite five or six miles across country. He sent for Gladiator himself, did he? Nothing of the kind, my friend. I sent for the horse. Yes, I wrote that note. I forged the signature, But Sir Charles won't believe *that*. I'm much too respectable a person. Besides, the note is in your pocket, and before I've done with you it will be burnt. You'll have the credit of having doctored Gladiator anyway. If you're sensible you'll have something else besides. Here's two hundred pounds," he threw a bag of gold upon the table. "The price of your sweetheart, isn't it? I don't want the girl, believe me. It was only a ruse, the better to bait the trap for you. If you'd been wise you'd have accepted Foster's offer a week back. You can, however, still accept it. Give the horse a dose and I'll hand over the money. You can take him back to the stables and then get clear away. Elsie can join you. If you refuse Gladiator will be doctored just the same, and you will have to face the music. No one will credit your story—Foster and I can both prove an *alibi*. Now then, choose."

For answer Ted flung himself on to Houghton. He was tall and well built, and for a moment Houghton staggered

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under the shock, the next he had tripped his opponent quickly and neatly. Gardiner fell like a log, striking his head against the fender.

Instinctively Elsie rushed towards him. But as she reached the door she paused. For the moment she was powerless to help her lover, but she could at least defend his honour. She must wait and hear their plans, then strive to outwit their designs on Gladiator.

"He's got a nasty blow," said Houghton. "He'll lie senseless for a bit. Stay you here, Foster, and watch him. I'll go to Gladiator."

"No you don't, mister," said Foster angrily. "I'm not going to be left here to take the blame. You knocked him down, and here you've got to stay. I'll dose the nag, and then I'm off."

"Have your way," said Houghton, "but for Heaven's sake look sharp. You've got the stuff?"

Miles nodded, taking a bottle from his pocket.

"Be very quiet, and don't take a light into the stables. Somebody might spot it, the farmer may be home at any minute. Gladiator's by himself, they turned out my nag, so there's no chance of a mistake. Look slippy, Foster."

The ex-jockey nodded, and commenced his preparations, emptying the contents of the bottle into a basin.

Quick as thought Elsie flew down the passage leading from the store room into the garden. Hardly daring to breathe, she made her way round to the stables and softly opened the door. Miles would be about five minutes preparing poor Gladiator's supper, she decided. Five minutes in which to save her sweetheart's honour, and stave off ruin to Sir Charles. No wonder her heart beat quickly and her cheeks grew pale.

The horse whinnied as she entered, the beautiful creature seemed to love her and would follow her like a dog. She led him from the stable into the meadow opening from the yard. Tethering him to a tree, she called and quickly caught Houghton's chestnut. In another minute he had taken Gladiator's place in the empty stable. It was a dark night, and crouching beside the favourite in the paddock, she strained her eyes until she saw Miles Foster leave the house, enter the stable, and close the door.

Then, her pulses beating madly, her heart throbbing, and her brain on fire, she jumped on Gladiator's back. Thank Heaven she had learnt to ride without a saddle, thank Heaven the horse knew and responded to her touch. At any moment Foster might discover the trick she'd played, and, giving chase, capture the horse she'd done so much to save.

"Faster, my beauty, faster," she murmured, and the horse heard and understood, and putting out his matchless speed, swept like the wind across the country.

It was a mad gallop, and when at last they reached "The Firs," and Sir Charles was fetched by the astonished servants, Elsie had only strength to cry:

"I've saved him, I've brought him safe and sound. But they've killed Ted, they——"

She staggered, and the Baronet caught her gently in his arms.

* * * * *

A few days later Elsie found herself a heroine! The story of that dark night's work was spread abroad the countryside. Ted, little the worse for his rough treatment, came in for a share of the applause. Altogether it was a most satisfactory ending to what might have been a black chapter in both their lives.

Gladiator won the Derby, and made Sir Charles' fortune. He proved himself not ungrateful to his trainer, and at the present time Ted is on the road to prosperity.

Foster and Houghton were not again heard of. Houghton, it was alleged, was a member of a gang of sharpers, and had been sent down for the express purpose of corrupting Gladiator's trainer.

In that, however, despite bribes and other mean devices, he had not succeeded, therefore he had determined to deal with Gladiator himself.

Houghton's poor chestnut was found dead in the stables. Gladiator's dose had been too much for him. He, and he alone, had proved the victim of that dark night's work!

**John K. Prothero.**

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# THE TOWERS OF NOTRE DAME.

"No, never, never; I shall never marry you now! I hate you!" And pretty Yolande de Mirbelle stamped her tiny foot. Anger shone in her eyes, as blue as the azure sky, and generally so full of laughter and mischief; her rosy lips wont to open in rippling smiles on pearly teeth are to-day hard and set; her brow, wreathed with a crown of golden hair, is puckered with a wrathful frown. She stands before the low couch from which she has risen under the heat of passion, and she hurls words of bitter scorn and hatred at her cousin and *fiancé*, the young Marquis of Kéranville.

Bewildered, the young man stands utterly at a loss to account for this unexpected storm.

Hubert de Kéranville and Yolande de Mirbelle had played together as children; he being several years her senior allowed his wee girl tyrant to order him about, and was ever her ready, willing slave.

One sunny Spring afternoon Hubert and his little fluffy, golden-haired cousin were playing in the apple orchard of the Château de Mirbelle in Normany; Hubert was perched up among the branches of a gnarled old apple tree, showering down the rosy petals on the head of little Yolande underneath. Suddenly she called out to him:

"Hubert, I'm tired of this game; let us play at something else."

"All right!" Hubert rejoined; "but what shall we play at?"

"Well, come down; how can I shout out to you when I want to talk seriously to you? This is to be a very serious game!"

The boy tumbled down on to the grass close beside her.

"Well, now, little one, what is the game?"

"Make love to me!" was the startling rejoinder. Hubert, as a well brought up aristocratic little boy, was rather shocked at this.

"Yolande, you know little girls in France should never think of such things."

"But I am not a little girl; we are playing just now at being grown up. I am a young lady."

"But, Yolande," laughingly protested Hubert,

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"young ladies do not ask young men to make love to them."

"Oh, nonsense, but they do! The other day, just before we came down to Normandy, I was walking with my *bonne* Annette in the Luxembourg gardens, and we met a soldier—oh, such a fine *cuirassier*—and Annette ran up to him, and she must have asked him to kiss her, because he put his arm round her and did so."

"Yolande, little girls should not notice such things."

"Why?"

The boy moralist did not exactly know how to answer the child's puzzling query, so he ignored the question and went on very gravely.

"Annette is a bad, naughty woman. I shall tell mother to advise auntie's having another maid for you."

"No, no! I like Annette, she tells me such funny stories. But now, Hubert, I wanted to tell you, when I am really grown up I am going to be married to you."

Hubert laughed. "All right, but tell me, dearie, why?"

"Oh, well, because I should like to be called Madame la Marquise!"

"Is that all?" And the boy looked rather wistfully at his little cousin.

"Well, no, I like you, Hubert; in fact, I think I like you and Stella about equal."

Stella was Yolande's little white Pomeranian. Somehow, her childish instinct warned her that Hubert felt pained and hurt, so she raised herself on tiptoe, and holding up her little rosebud of a mouth, she said quite earnestly:

"Hubert, dear, you may kiss me! Annette says people who are going to be married always kiss!"

* * * * *

Through an unforeseen chain of circumstances Hubert and Yolande were parted soon after this episode, and did not meet again for ten years. Hubert accompanied his father, the Marquis de Kéranville, to Constantinople, where the latter had been sent as ambassador to represent France at the Ottoman Court. A few years later the Marquis died, and his son entered the military school of St. Cyr, where, after a brilliant career at his different studies, he passed into the army and was ordered to Madagascar. Meanwhile, Yolande had been found too impetuous and self-willed to be brought up at home under the too easy rule of an indulgent mother and yielding governess, and it had been found necessary to put the young lady into the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Versailles, where she duly finished her studies. The kind-hearted sisters knew exactly how to deal with this high-spirited girl, and when she left the convent at eighteen to return to her home she was a highly accomplished, gifted person, thoroughly fitted to take her place in society. As the only daughter of the Countess de Mirbelle, every one knew Yolande would have a pretty large fortune as her dowry, and this, added to the fact of her being very beautiful, made suitors innumerable plead for her hand. Her mother was ever receiving overtures of marriage from dukes, marquises, and counts, but Yolande's invariable answer was: "Mother, darling, I have only just come back to you, and do you want already to turn me out? I do not wish to marry yet awhile." But suddenly Yolande changed her mind on this momentous question, and it came about in this way:

One afternoon Madame de Mirbelle was confined to her room with that favourite French ailment, a headache, and Yolande was alone in the drawing-room bending over her tapestry frame, when the footman threw open the door, and announced:

"Monsieur le Marquis de Kéranville!"

A burning flush suffused the young girl's cheek, and she rose from her seat and advanced with extended hand to meet the bronze-hued Captain of Chasseurs in his becoming pale blue and silver uniform.

"Hubert this is an unexpected pleasure and surprise."

"Can this be my little playmate, my little Yolande?"

"Am I so changed?" she coquettishly answered.

"The chrysalis has become a butterfly with gold and azure wings, the seed has born a flower of regal beauty, the shell has developed a pearl of surpassing value!"

"Fie, fie, for shame, you naughty flatterer!" but Yolande's eyes brightened with delight under her cousin's undisgusied gaze of rapt admiration. "Come," she resumed, "let us talk seriously; when did you return from Madagascar?"

"I arrived this morning in Paris, and you see I have lost no time in coming to pay my respects to my aunt, and pretty cousin."

Yolande pretended not to hear this latter part of the speech.

"My mother is suffering from a bad headache, but later on we shall go to her boudoir; she gave orders not to be disturbed, but a hero back from the wars like you, surely there is no law for such a one!" And half-mockingly the girl signed to him to be seated. "Now tell me all about your campaigns?"

"Tush; nonsense! I am sick of warfare—it is a game I am tired of; let us play at something else. Do you remember that last time we played together in the orchard at Mirbelle how you suggested we should play at *something else?*"

Yolande blushed and showed evidently she had not forgotten that far-away Spring morning amid the falling apple blossoms.

"Yolande," he continued very softly, "do you recollect the game you suggested then? You asked me to make love to you; I want to play that game now!"

The girl toyed nervously with a bunch of violets at her waist, but did not answer.

"And you said you were going to marry me when you were grown up. You are grown up, and, darling, I want to marry you!"

Still she did not raise her eyes, and he continued pleading passionately:

"Yolande dearest, I have never forgotten our boy and girl courtship; by the bivouac fire, through the roar of the battle-field, I kept engraven on my heart the image of my golden-haired little fairy cousin plighting her troth to me amongst the flowering apple blossoms. To-day I come to claim your promise. Dearie, what is your answer?"

The Marquis boldly possessed himself of one of Yolande's hands and, incircling her waist, drew her towards him. "That day you said, 'Hubert, you may kiss me,' will you not say so to me to-day?"

So low that he could barely catch the words she murmured: "Hubert, you may kiss me!"

Fondly he pressed her to his heart while he playfully plied her with questions.

"And is it only because you would like to be called Madame la Marquise that you are going to marry me? And must I share your affection with your pet dog?"

In the midst of these happy remembrances of their childhood, the heavy velvet hangings were drawn aside and Madame de Mirbelle stood on the threshold. She paused aghast, horrified when she beheld her daughter's waist incircled by the arm of an officer of Chasseurs.

"Monsieur! Yolande!" gasped in agonised tones the bewildered Countess. The guilty couple started aside, but they looked not one whit ashamed of themselves as they advanced to meet the irate mother. Yolande's eyes shone with a happy look of intense joy.

"Mother, mother, Hubert has returned——"

"To claim his *fiancée*," broke in the young officer eagerly; "aunt, allow me," and he gallantly saluted his aunt's cheek.

The Countess, on recognising her nephew, was somewhat mollified, but still she remonstrated:

"My dear boy, you are so impulsive, so 'impossible'; surely you know you ought to have come to me to demand your cousin's hand, and not to have presumed to speak to her

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yourself. It is most improper, most injudicious, quite an unprecedented event in our society."

The young people pleaded their intimacy in childhood, the unexpected return of the young officer, and the impetuousness of youth.

A French mother never loses sight of the practical side of things, and Mme. de Mirbelle knew that an alliance with the wealthy Marquis de Kéranville was for her daughter a splendid match; she was, therefore, easily brought to overlook and forgive the unconventional wooing of her future son-in-law.

From that day Hubert and Yolande lived in a sort of ethereal paradise of their own. They were officially engaged, and together day after day they went to balls, dinners, theatres, and picnics. Of course, according to the French strict rules in such cases, Mme. de Mirbelle accompanied them everywhere, but she was a good-natured, kindly soul, and often left the young folks to themselves.

Then there came the fatal day when all the sunshine went out of Yolande's happy daydream. Every morning since she had been engaged the Marquis sent her a dainty basket bedecked with bows of pink and blue ribbon, filled with the sweetest and choicest of white flowers, azaleas and lilies of the valley, white lilac and pale tinted roses.

One morning she wanted to send off some flowers to a sick friend in the country, and she went into one of the big flower shops on the Boulevard. She happened to notice two exquisite baskets of flowers exactly similar as to blossoms and ribbons; her eye caught the two cards attached to the handle of each basket. On one she read "Mdlle. de Mirbelle," on the other, to her amazement, she saw written "Mdlle. de Verny."

"Ah!" said the officious shop girl, "Mademoiselle is looking at those beautiful flowers that M. le Marquis de Kéranville has just ordered. Every day he bids us prepare two of these floral presents exactly similar in every way."

Yolande felt faint and sick, her heart pulsed high in an agonising passion of jealousy. What, those flowers she prized so were but the duplicates of ones sent to another woman! Oh, how false, how treacherous men could be! She hurried home, and rushing to her room bolted herself in, and flung herself on to the couch to give way to passionate weeping.

Hubert was false to her. Oh, she would die of a broken heart! But first she would show him how utterly she despised and loathed him!

Some few hours afterwards, when the young Marquis sauntered into his aunt's drawing-room, he found Yolande white and resolute, with set lips and strained eyes, and he was greeted with the passionate sentence with which this story opens. Again and again she vowed that she would never marry him. The enraged, excited girl flew to his basket of flowers lying on a marble table close at hand, with an eager, passionate gesture she wrenched the flowers out of the stand, threw them on the ground, and stamped on them.

"As I trample on your flowers, Monsieur le Marquis, so do I trample on the love you professed to feel for me."

"Yolande, tell me at least what have I done? Everyone who is accused of a heinous crime is at least told what his offence is, so that he may justify himself."

"Justify yourself, *you*. No, Monsieur, it is impossible. Go. I forbid you ever to enter my presence again." And like a tragedy queen she swept out of the room, leaving him standing speechless in the midst of the room.

Yolande's brain was on fire with the tumult of angry passions that raged unchecked within her bosom. Hastily putting on a hat, veil, and gloves, she peremptorily ordered her old nurse Marion to follow her, as she wanted to go for a walk. Marion adored her young mistress, and never ventured to oppose any of her wildest whims. They left the Hôtel de Mirbelle by the side door, giving into a back street. Scarcely knowing or caring whither she bent her steps, Yolande walked on and on, and poor old Marion could hardly keep up with her quick strides. Suddenly they found themselves on the "Parvis Notre Dame." Yolande glanced up at the grim and stately building; then, like a flash of lightning, the thought coursed through her brain, she wanted air. Well, she would climb to the top of the towers of Notre Dame, and there sit down to collect her thoughts.

"Marion, I am going up there."

"No, surely not; Mademoiselle is joking?"

Marion knew of old no remonstrances ever availed when her young lady's mind was made up.

"And does Mademoiselle want me to drag my weary old limbs up there too?"

"No, no, my good Marion; come, I am not quite so cruel as that. You sit and wait for me in the porter's lodge."

Yolande paid her admittance fee to the towers, and began her ascent up, through the tortuous, winding stairs. She gained the first platform, rather out of breath, gazed awhile on the hideous grinning gargoyles and demons, elfs and spirits carved in stone.

The bell-ringer came forth from his shed, insinuatingly offering his services to show her over the huge brazen bell, which only tolls for births, marriages, or burials of great people. But Yolande turned away; this was not high enough, she was not far enough removed from all humanity, which she just now hated with a deadly hatred, because one mortal had proved false. The stairs leading to the top platform were not lit up, and the night was very black.

Yolande groped her way up; the walls were damp and clammy with moisture, and altogether it was a weird, uncanny feeling. She sat down on one of the recesses just by the edge of the tower, and gazed in awe at the panorama stretched out before her.

Suddenly she started; a black cat with glaring fiery eyeballs and tail erect stood at her elbow, mewing in a most unearthly way. Yolande screamed; to her affrighted, overstrained mind this black cat seemed to be an impersonification of the devil sent there to tempt her to her doom.

The colour left her cheeks, she tried to jump to her feet, but a deadly feeling of sickness pervaded her whole being, her eyes closed, she swayed, and for one awful instant the most appalling of deaths threatened the wretched girl. But in her great extremity, while a hideous end confronted her, two protecting arms were stretched out to support her, and she was saved. Saved and clasped in a loving embrace. Half fainting, paralysed by terror, she lay in Hubert de Kéranville's grasp.

"Yolande, my darling!"

She opened her eyes, then shuddering, turned them away from those of him whom she so lately scorned, and her gaze once more reverted to the black cat, calmly licking his paws.

"Why it is only 'Quasimodo,' the black cat belonging to the bell-ringer. How could you be so childish as to let a pussy cat terrify you so?" the Marquis queried.

"Oh, I was so unhappy, beside myself with grief; but," and she trie to freed herself from his incircling arms, "how is it *you* are here? Let me go," she whispered fiercely.

"I followed you step by step, Yolande; tell me what have I done that in one twenty-four hours you could so change?"

"Go, leave me Monsieur; go to Mademoiselle de Verny!"

"Mademoiselle de Verny! Yolande, can you be jealous of my friend the Baron de Saint-Pierre's *fiancée*? Why, they are to be married to-day week!"

"Then she is as false to him as you are to me. How dare you send her daily the same flowers that you send to me?"

"Is that the key to the mystery which has made us both so unhappy? Oh, Yolande, little one, could you not trust me? Saint-Pierre knew I was engaged, he knows nothing about flowers, or what ladies like, so he had begged of me, when ordering flowers for my *fiancée*, to order some exactly similar ones for him."

"Oh, Hubert, can you ever forgive me?" And Yolande, humble and penitent, sued for forgiveness, which her generous lover was only too ready to grant.

**Lily Butler.**

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# The Patron of an Artist.

**A Dainty Little Tale of a Parting and a Reunion.**

THEY had met—loved—and parted, promising to write. There was nothing absolutely original in the occurrence; thousands had done identically the same thing before in their time, and, in all probability, thousands will emulate their example years hence. But the promise made on a liner's deck, though sacred at the time, was soon forgotten; and five years elapsed without a line being exchanged between them. And this was the man's fault.

Charlie Montrose had bade Zara Hoste adieu at Vera Cruz, when she was but a girl of sixteen, or rather woman, as girls of that age are ranked out in Mexico; one matures early in Central America.

A year passed, then Art had gradually blotted out the remembrance of her Madonna-like face. True, he had kept five of her letters, unanswered, by the way, which detailed to him her trusting love and her progress in sculpture; but they had lain on the mantelpiece of his study till dust had begrimed them and nearly obliterated the faintly-written words. Then four years lapsed, and Zara was almost forgotten by the man on whom fortune had smiled. Therefore it was somewhat strange that Charlie Montrose dreamt sadly of the past during an interval at a ball given by Lady Belmont at her house in Park Lane.

"Why so glum, Mr. Montrose?" she queried gaily, tapping him playfully on the shoulder with her fan. "You have not done your duty by standing out three dances! I must find you a partner."

"May I have the pleasure, Lady Belmont?"

"With me? Oh, I should be delighted, only, alas! my programme is filled," she replied vivaciously. "But I will introduce you to Miss Vivian. You know the great sculptor?"

"Surely not the Miss Vivian of 'Sleep' renown?"

"The same."

"Pleasure?" She smiled quizzically. "I heard once that you were jealous of her!" He bowed acquiescingly.

"You heard correctly, Lady Belmont; for once report was truthful."

"Impossible!" She gazed wonderingly at the rising artist. "Why, Mr. Montrose, are you jealous of an artist of a rival art?"

He smiled enigmatically. "My dear Lady Belmont, I am jealous because she endows cold marble with life; my figures are coloured by paint, but not by life. My paintings are but the outcome of—shall we say, talent?—while her conceptions are born of genius." He paused, then added brightly: "However, I am wildly anxious to know her, or even to see her, both of which pleasures have hitherto been denied me. Is she old? Learned? Or does she wear glasses?"

Lady Belmont laughed merrily. "Oh, dear, no! She is extremely youthful, being only twenty-two, in fact. Adorably pretty! Witty, and does *not* wear glasses!"

"Then the pleasure is doubled, Lady Belmont," he replied smilingly, as his hostess tripped away to speak to another of her guests. The band struck up the opening bars of a dreamy waltz, and Montrose, noticing that the promised introduction did not come off, retreated into an ante-room, and seating himself on a lounge, gave himself up to the "blues." Through the half-closed portière, he saw the giddy whirl of dancers circling round the room, noticing their smiling faces with a smile that was born of cynicism. He shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"How true it is," he murmured reflectively, "that one-half of the world is happy, caring nothing for the miserable other half!"

A light step behind him caused Montrose to turn round. A brunette was coming towards him—a brunette whose beauty, surpassing even his ideals of feminine beauty so often depicted on his canvasses, caused the master-artist to almost wonder as he gazed at the marvellous regularity of her finely-chiselled features. He rose, stretched out his hand mechanically to pull back the heavy portière for her to pass into the ball-room, when she stopped suddenly, and glancing swiftly up at the handsome face of the limner, said impulsively:

"Mr. Montrose, the great artist, I believe?" He glanced straight into the eyes raised shyly to his, then replied:

"That is my name. As a great artist, I believe I am a fraud!" Then added modestly: "I have been lucky, that is all!"

"You are modest," she said gently. "I hope you will excuse my presumption in speaking to you without a formal introduction, but I was very anxious to speak to you. I only saw you once before to-night—at the Academy; you were pointed out to me."

"I am indeed honoured by your remembering my features," he said politely. Then glancing steadily at her face, said thoughtfully, "But surely your face is familiar? It is—ah, yes!" he cried bitterly, "I know whom you resemble. You are much prettier, yet so strangely—strangely like a girl I once knew!" He sighed, as he let the portière fall from grasp.

"Indeed?" The brown eyes opened widely. "I am pleased I resemble that lady—you—you were interested in. It is quite romantic, to be included, if even in so slight a degree, in a great man's life!" Montrose flushed dully.

"I am afraid I was speaking my thoughts," he said awkwardly. "I apologise. I must have bored you!"

"On the contrary," she replied brightly, "I am interested. As I resemble this lady, will you not tell me more about her? Or would it be indiscreet on my part to proffer such a request?"

"I am sorry to refuse!" he replied, glancing at her. "It is very difficult to do so, but no man cares to record a shabby action of his own."

"But, Mr. Montrose," she murmured, "you have always been spoken of in the papers as the soul of honour!"

"So much for the truth of journalism!" he said bitterly.

"But, surely, Mr. Montrose"—her voice trembled a little—"you have never broken your word or——?" He laughed harshly.

"That is identically what I have done!" he said. "I broke a pledge made six years ago, and now dare not redeem it."

"Indeed!" said the brunette, smiling archly. "And why not?"

"Because she would despise me now!" He stopped short, blushing hotly as he realised that he had committed himself. "May I escort you to the ball-room?"

She blissfully ignored his question.

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"So you had asked her to marry you," she said thoughtfully, "and then grew tired of her."

"You appear to be a thought-reader!" exclaimed Montrose almost savagely. "You are, however, correct. I did ask her to marry me, then we drifted apart; four years passed and I did not write, and when I did my letters came back marked 'unknown.' You, however, are wrong when you say I got tired of her. I have loved her all these years, and now, when she has passed beyond my reach—— Bah! why do I speak to you, an utter stranger, in these terms?" he asked, with sudden coldness. "Allow me to conduct you to the ball-room, and pray Heaven I may never see you again; you remind me too vividly of what I have lost!"

He raised the portière.

"No," she replied impressively, seating herself on the lounge. "I will not go in. Sit down here beside me, I want to speak to you!" He turned to face her, cold lines hardening his face.

"Pardon me," he said haughtily, "I am unaccustomed to be ordered—even by a beautiful woman!" She blushed crimson, and he, seeing her embarrassment, hastened to apologise.

"I'm sorry for the way I spoke to you just now," he said awkwardly. "My pride is my fail——"

"Charlie!" There was a pathetic yearning in the way her lips lingered over the name. He started violently, stared hard at his companion, then approaching the lounge, said hoarsely:

"Is it possible? No, you jest! Yet—Zara, can—can it be you? For God's sake tell me if this is truth or am I dreaming?"

"It is true!" she said softly, rising.

"No, you are joking, or I must be dreaming!" He seized her hand and gripped it, then said feverishly: "No, this is real—I am awake!" Then, dropping her hand, said, almost wistfully: "You have come to reproach me; is it not so, Zara? Be merciful!"

"I came over to England to see you, not to reproach you!" she replied gently. "Oh, Charlie, you cannot imagine what agony I underwent during those four years of silence! A year ago I left Vera Cruz in the hope of finding you, and have only just succeeded in seeing you. I suppose you despise me now I have committed that heinous crime of running after a man!"

She asked the question defiantly, a crimson blush suffusing her cheeks.

"Despise you?" he echoed wonderingly, drawing her trembling form to him. "Zara! Zara! it is I who pose you that question!"

"Should I have crossed the Atlantic if I had?" she queried softly. "I thought you had forgotten me, and had I not been assured of your love to-night, I should never have revealed my personality."

"And you?" he asked anxiously. "Do you still care for that artist who asked you to be his six years ago?"

"As fondly as I did then," she replied simply.

"And if he wanted to keep you to that promise?" he asked gently, tilting her face up to his. "Would you repeat the answer of six years ago?"

"How do I know he would not ignore me again?" she asked archly. He sighed, then muttered bitterly:

"True! true! It is only natural you should doubt the sincerity of my love." She melted at the sight of his dejection, then, nestling her cheek against his, replied:

"Can you forgive me for being so horrid, dear? I never meant it, for I still adhere to my promise of six years ago."

She glanced archly up at him as she uttered the words, blushing so prettily the while that Montrose flung discretion to the winds and kissed her passionately, Zara wriggled herself clear of his retentive clasp, exclaiming merrily:

"There, that will do! Enough is as good as a feast; remember this is at a ball, please, and see, you have taken my fringe out of curl! When we are married I shall only allow you to kiss me once a day, but never at a ball!"

"I shall disobey that mandate if you persist in looking so pretty," he said laughingly. "We must go into the ball-room, or our hostess will be wondering what we are doing. Lady Belmont has promised to introduce me to a Miss Vivian, the great sculptor. I feel certain she will be horribly vain and conceited. By the way, talking of sculpture, you used to turn out things in quite a masterly manner once upon a time. Do you still, and have you improved?"

"I think I have, Charlie," she replied demurely. "Why?"

"I must have taught you thoroughly," he said; then added seriously: "My name will help you along tremendously. In fact, I will become your patron!" A faint smile crossed her lips, and her eyes danced with latent merriment.

"Yes," she said softly. "It would."

"Yes, I must have taught you thoroughly," he continued reflectively, raising the portière for her to pass. "And you must stick to figures; you used to chisel them out marvellously."

"Yes, I think I shall keep to figures," she replied, passing him.

"Ah! here you are," cried Lady Belmont, sweeping down on Zara. "I must introduce you to Charlie Montrose, R.A., my dear. He's wildly jealous of you, isn't it lov—— Oh, here you are!" she exclaimed, as Montrose entered the room. "Here is *the* Miss Vivian of 'Sleep' renown—Mr. Montrose—Miss——"

"I knew her years ago," interrupted Montrose starting, and colouring awkwardly. "But I was not, however, aware that she was the great sculptor. Miss—Miss Vivian has done me the honour of consenting to be my wife this evening. I tell you, Lady Belmont, because you have always followed my career with such kindly interest."

"I object to the word 'years,'" Zara said merrily. "It makes me feel an old crony."

"Then your fresh beauty gives the lie to the sensation," Montrose replied gallantly.

"How annoying it is!" exclaimed Lady Belmont smiling.

"Annoying?" echoed Montrose surprised.

"I suppose I must congratulate you both," she said gaily. "And I do, most heartily, but all the same, it is annoying—excessively so."

"But why?" insisted Zara.

"Well, you see," said Lady Belmont merrily, "I was hoping to pit the two wits of my party against one another on the subject of the rival arts, and now I am to be denied the pleasure of hearing the discussion."

"You have been the innocent means of uniting two hearts which had strayed apart, dear Lady Belmont," replied Montrose gaily. "Is not that a sufficient compensation for the loss of the argument?"

**Tristan K. Monck.**

MRS. SCRIBBLER (impressively): "Whatever you do, never, never, marry a newspaper man." School chum: "Why?" "I married one, and I know. Every night my husband brings home a big bundle of newspapers from all over the country, and they drive me crazy." "The newspapers?" "Indeed they do. They are just crammed with the most astonishing bargains in shops a hundred miles away."

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# A QUESTION OF PROPOSALS.

**Telling of a Dilemma and its Solution.**

"I have something on my mind which is perplexing, rather than unpleasant, but which preoccupies me a good deal."

"If you were a woman," remarked Mrs. Eden, the charming little widow, "I should say you had just received a proposal, and didn't know how to answer it."

"But being a mere man, I'm in the far more difficult position of having a proposal to make——"

Mrs. Eden looked at him with her small and lustrous head on one side.

"Yet of not being able to make up your mind to whom."

His hostess rose.

"The sun is in your eyes, isn't it? No, don't stir; I never allow anyone to arrange my blinds but myself; other people only disarrange them."

She stood with her back to Holt while she lowered an inch or two the silken and lace flounced blind.

She returned to the sofa.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have a vague desire to propose to woman in general, or to some indefinite yet-to-be-met-with she?"

"I ought to have said, 'to which.' For there are two girls——"

"Ah, two girls," repeated Mrs. Eden.

"Who are both so charming that I can't decide between them, and so I come to you, as usual, to help me out of my difficulty."

"Then I know these highly-fortunate young women, one of whom you intend thus to distinguish?"

"Oh, it's easy to laugh! But you've so often advised me to get married that it's only kind to help me to put your advice into practice. I think you know Margaret Whelan?"

"Intimately. Did I not see her for a whole day in the country last summer? And I approve your taste. She is good to look at."

Holt appeared pleased.

"Yes, is she not handsome? Such a fine figure, and so tall."

"That's her one fault. She's almost too tall. She's taller than you."

"Dear lady. You're quite mistaken. She is three inches at least shorter than I am. She is certainly not more than five feet eight."

"What are inches?" cried his hostess. "A woman is as tall as she looks, and Miss Whelan looks taller than you."

There was silence.

"Then I suppose it's her long frocks," observed Mrs. Eden in a conciliatory voice, but Holt had abandoned the argument.

"Do you like her as well as you admire her?" he wanted to know.

"I adore her. Women never do less than adore each other on so short an acquaintanceship. But I should have got on with her better had I not been so dreadfully afraid of her."

"Why on earth should you be afraid of her?"

"O, she's so clever, so well informed——"

"She is well informed."

"While I, you know, am such a perfect little ignoramus."

"I know nothing of the sort. In your own way you are immensely clever, too."

"But in what a commonplace way! I can keep house, certainly, and out of debt, and I could make my own clothes, and cook my own dinner, if it were necessary; but, then, any woman can sew and cook."

"I wish to heaven any woman could! I wish my landlady could!"

"But I can't read Greek, as Miss Whelan does. She carries a pocket 'Aristophanes' with her up the river, and we could see her now and again enjoying silent laughter as she read. It's uncommonly clever to enjoy Greek jokes, isn't it? But then, of course, you and she could enjoy them together."

"Oh, as to my Greek," said Holt, and with a shake of his head he flung his last memories of it afar. "Margaret, you see, studied at Girton."

"Could I fail to see it? Girton is written all over her in indelible ink. It exudes from her manner, which is an impressive manner, an overwhelming one. A manner which puts me altogether into the shade in spite of the fact that I'm a widow with grey hairs."

"Have you grey hairs?" asked Holt, much interested. "I don't see any."

"There was certainly one there yesterday. Well, at least Miss Whelan need never fear grey hairs; her hair is too pale coloured to show any."

"She has curiously colourless hair, I admit," said Holt. "It would almost justify the use of hair dye. Kitty Redfern's hair is much prettier."

"So the other one is Kitty? Dear little Kitty! I like Kitty. Everyone likes her. It would be impossible not to do so, for she agrees with everyone and is of your own opinion even before you've expressed it. She's so beautifully feminine."

Holt assented. "She's like the finest, the most plastic clay, the whitest unwritten page——"

"On which you write all you wish, but the writing dries off immediately, leaving the surface white as before; while her plasticity is of the kind which takes, but cannot retain an impression. The moment the pressure is removed her mind springs back to its original formlessness."

"It is true that her innocence of any opinions is sometimes perturbing——"

"For while Echo is charming in the fable you hardly want her seated by your fireside."

"And I shouldn't wish my wife to be a mere mass of concessions."

"You are too intelligent. There are many men for whom Kitty Redfern would be ideal; for the man who merely requires a presentable mistress of his house, a healthy mother for his children. But you need something more than this; you need a companion——"

"With whom I can enjoy Greek jokes. Which seems to bring me back to Margaret Whelan, does it not?"

"Oh, but a companion who is also a good comrade. Some one who can appreciate your own little things as well as those of Aristophanes. Now, I should scarcely venture to try any joke on Miss Whelan which was less than a thousand years old. On the whole, I don't consider her any more suitable than Kitty. Less so, in fact. For if one doesn't want too much concession in a woman, neither does one want too forcible opposition. And Miss Whelan can be forcible. I've heard her."

"So have I," murmured Holt, reminiscent.

Mrs. Eden laughed.

"You're exhilarating!" she told him.

"I'm glad I exhilarate you, for I'm much depressed myself," said he. "I seem unable to pull this affair off. You tell me to get married and I try to obey you, yet my suggestions don't

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find any favour in your eyes. Perhaps you will make a suggestion yourself?"

"My suggestion would be such an exceedingly obvious one——"

"Which is actually the reason I can't see it for myself."

"It is merely that you should make an effort to obtain the woman you're in love with."

"But surely I'm more or less in love with Margaret and Kitty, too!"

"Believe me, very much less rather than more."

"Dear lady! By what signs do you judge me?"

"By these signs," Mrs. Eden told him. "When you are really in love with a woman you don't weigh her in the balance with anyone else. She stands above everyone, unique and alone. You don't ask other women their opinion of her; you force your opinion on them. You are in her society as often as you can manage it, and you are filled with solicitude for her welfare when ever she is out of your sight. You joke with her, laugh with her, discuss with her, and disagree with her. You quarrel with her and make it up again. You lay open to her the subject you have nearest your heart, and in any difficulty your first thought is to take her advice."

"But there's no woman in the world towards whom I feel like that but you," said Holt with sincerity. "And—and—but why——! What a fool you must think me!"

He moved close beside Mrs. Eden on the sofa and took her hand between his own!"

"Dear—my dear Mrs. Eden"—he asked her persuasively, "do you think you could ever get to love me the least bit?"

Mrs. Eden turned away to hide her smiles, and having subdued them turned back with a histrionic word of surprise upon her tongue tip, but, looking straight into his eyes, she suddenly threw away play acting and gave him the warm and happy truth.

"You dear and foolish person!" she murmured, "could you not see I have loved you for ever so long?"

But Holt, who hid some wisdom beneath much apparent folly, was wise enough to let this query fall.

**G. H. Page.**

## ACCIDENT TO MISS MADGE MORRIS.

I am sure all my readers will be sorry to hear that Miss Madge Morris, who has, for so long, been your willing counsellor in any heart-troubles of which you may have confided to her, has met with a nasty accident. Owing to the horse stumbling and falling, she was thrown out of a hansom, and though, by marvellous good fortune, no bones were broken, it will be several days before she is about again. Under the circumstances, therefore, I have thought it best to omit the "In Confidence" page altogether for this week, rather than give it to anyone else. You will be glad to hear that, just as I am going to press, I have received a message from Miss Morris to the effect that she hopes to be sufficiently recovered to continue her services in your little paper next week.

## "TOPIC" COMPETITION RESULT.

In the "Topic" competition, the first prize of a solid silver pencil case goes to Miss M. Hogg, of 15, Mid Street, Fraserbury, Scotland. Her sentence, which has reference to the King's tour, is—"'Tis to this shore the hero hies—this is his rest resort." Consolation prizes go to the following: D. Pope 5, Vernon Place, Birkenhead; L. White, 162, Camberwell New Road, S. E.; P. J. G. Lewis, Jersey Snuff Box, Dover; Mrs. E. Ryan, 21, Abbott's Road, East Ham; H. Barnes, 2, Vauxhall Walk, S. E.; J. G. Bennett, 8, Sydney Street, Grantham; W. Pearman, 115, Brewery Road, Plumstead; D. G. Jelley, 85, Ermine Road, Ladywell; J. A. Downie, 231, Great Junction Street, Leith; and J. G. Inch, 23, Southwold Road, Upper Clapton, N. E.

# *Your Editor Chats.*

A most remarkable thing has happened in connection with Cynthia's "Confessions." Two days ago I received the following letter from Miss Cynthia Hamilton:

Empress Club,
Dover Street,
London, W.
Monday, September 1, 1902.

Dear Mr. Editor,—I have had quite an adventure, and am naturally rather excited about it. This afternoon, about four o'clock, I was having tea alone in Bond Street, when, on glancing up, I saw Arthur St. J. H—— (whose name you remember I put as Percival Hope in my "Confessions"). He was with two ladies, most elegantly dressed. He seemed much graver and older than when he used to call at poor J.'s house in Pont Street. (J. is the initial of the real Christian name of the adventuress called Frances Norton in Cynthia's articles.—Ed.)

After a while he looked my way, and caught my eye. He did not seem to remember me for a second, but when I smiled he nodded gravely, and a few minutes later excused himself from his companions and came over to me.

Of course I was awfully perturbed for a moment. I thought at first that he was going to row me about the "Confessions," but then I thought and hoped that probably he never read your paper. But I went furiously red all the same.

He said in his quiet, even voice: "You are looking very well, but a little sadder than in the old days." He paused, then continued in the same even way: "I see you've taken to writing."

I dropped my eyes and blushed scarlet. He had not only read the "Confessions," but knew who had written them! When I looked up again he was smiling.

"They are clever—very clever, Miss Hamilton! I congratulate you. But you're hard on that chap, Percival Hope!" He smiled. "You make out he didn't care for Cynthia very much. In writing this you are misleading the public, Miss Hamilton. He did." Another pause, during which I felt (although my eyes were on my teacup) that he was looking at me. Then he took a deep breath. "You heard, of course, about Toby?" I said that I had not. "Poor youngster, he's gone to the—the dogs."

Then he roused himself. "Well, good-bye, Miss Hamilton; so glad to have met you again. Mr. Pettigrew and I are over for the Coronation. We leave on Wednesday for Paris for a week. I hope to meet you again when we return. We shall be staying at the Cecil. Good-bye!" and, shaking hands with me, he returned to his friends. Two minutes later he had gone!

I wonder if he will ever come into my life again?

Yours gratefully,

Cynthia Hamilton.

This incident is very gratifying, and shows that the facts stated by Cynthia in her confessions are practically correct. Of all the characters in this life drama, I consider the most interesting (after Mrs. Norton and Cynthia) to be Percival Hope. I feel that this young man, with his serious views of life, has had more experiences than the average young man of his age, and the renewed interest he has aroused by reason of his reappearance has set me thinking. If I can get hold of Hope and induce him to write up some of his experiences in high society—not only in connection with the Frances Norton business, but in other directions, both here and in America—would these experiences be appreciated by the readers? I wonder! Perhaps you will drop me a postcard and say what you think. I shall be guided by the opinions of the majority.

**Your Editor.**

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☞ **On Monday, Sept. 1st last, Cynthia Hamilton met Percival Hope at a tea shop in London. Read Cynthia's letter to your Editor on page 367.**

# THE CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA.

## Revelations in High Life by a Lady's Companion.

*The writer of this series of true stories acted for many years in the capacity of lady's companion to a Society adventuress who lived by robbing her unsuspecting guests. Names have, for obvious reasons, been altered, but the facts are correct.*

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mrs. FRANCES NORTON | An adventuress who makes her money by robbing her friends. |
| CYNTHIA HAMILTON | Her cousin and companion who, when the events related below took place, was quite unsuspicious of Mrs. Norton's guilt. |
| FLUFFY | An accomplice of Mrs. Norton's. |
| LORD KINROSS | One of Mrs. Norton's most devoted admirers. |
| SIR JOHN STRICKLAND | A poor baronet who is deeply in love with Mrs. Norton. |
| MARY VERNON | At one time engaged to be married to Lord Kinross. |
| HIRAM PETTIGREW | An American millionaire. |
| PERCIVAL HOPE | Pettigrew's secretary. |
| CASELLIS | A man from Jamaica who knows Mrs. Norton's past history. |

Frances Norton: Adventuress.

Cynthia Hamilton: Her companion.

## THE STORY STARTS HERE.

HAVING arrived in England from a Bruges convent to be companion to my cousin, Frances Norton, I soon discovered that my cousin was taking part in midnight card games, at which large sums of money were lost and won. The climax came one night when Mary Vernon staked her diamond earrings (a gift from Lord Kinross), and one of the onlookers found them to be paste. The diamonds, it appears, were stolen by Mrs. Norton.

A few weeks later, my cousin, with Fluffy's help, stole a pocket-book, containing about eight thousand pounds in paper money, from Hiram Pettigrew, an American millionaire, at the Café Regal.

We next moved into a house in Pont Street, and it was while here that Sir John Strickland, a poor baronet, proposed to Frankie, and was refused.

Later on Lord Kinross called at Pont Street for a private interview, and during that interview Percival Hope entered the room unannounced, and made the startling statement that Mary Vernon had discovered the thief who stole her diamonds. Shortly afterwards Frankie left the room; but I stayed, and, unknown to Kinross and Percival Hope, overheard Hope (who turned out to be Kinross' cousin) tell Kinross that in a fortnight's time he would prove that Frankie was an adventuress living upon the proceeds of the robbery of her friends. I told Frankie what I had overheard.

The next evening Lady Gaveston, Frankie's chaperon, informed her that she didn't approve of her behaviour towards Sir John Strickland, and that unless she decided at once either to marry or refuse him, she would return to Scotland. My cousin was given a fortnight's grace in which to make up her mind.

We went to the Derby, where Mrs. Curtis Blount, instigated by jealousy, enticed me to bet heavily, by which I lost £800. Frankie also lost heavily, and to pay our debts, she prevailed upon a young fellow, by promising marriage, to sign his uncle's name to a bill for £5,000.

That same night, at the Duchess of Warminster's ball, my cousin came face to face with a man from Jamaica who knew all about her past life. Percival Hope brought him in. It was a critical moment, but once again Frankie scored, for she managed to buy his silence.

The next day marked the end of the fortnight, during which Hope was to obtain proofs of Frankie's guilt. Owing, however, to Frankie's ingenuity, the indictment failed miserably.

Kinross then formally asked Frankie to be his wife. They were still in conversation when Sir John Strickland arrived, He had not heard of Frankie's engagement.

Before I could stop him he had gone into the room where my cousin and Kinross were talking. At sight of them he staggered and fell in a dead faint. Doctors were called, and pronounced it a paralytic seizure. Toby next called. In three days his uncle's bill must be redeemed. If this was not done he vowed that he would shoot himself.

Frankie being in a desperate strait, then got a large sum of money by worming a state secret out of Dollie Grendale, the wife of an M.P., and selling it to Pettigrew. While returning from Pettigrew's hotel late at night she met Kinross, who demanded an explanation.

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## FRANKIE MAKES AN AMERICAN COCKTAIL.

My thoughts were quickly turned from Frankie and Lord Kinross. Dollie Grendale clutched me tightly by the arms.

"What am I to do?" she cried, her breath coming and going in short, hard gasps. "I daren't go home. I'm—I'm *afraid*. I can't face Horace. I daren't!"

"You'll have to," I answered firmly. "Come, Dollie, pull yourself together. I don't suppose Frankie said anything to Mr. Grendale about your gambling. She only told you that to frighten you. You'll find she mentioned you'd let slip something about the arbitration, but assured your husband no one should be any the wiser. Cheer up, Dollie, Frankie isn't the sort of woman to make mischief."

I said this more in the hope of restoring Mrs. Grendale's peace of mind than from any great belief in the veracity of the statement.

As it happened, however, I had made a fairly shrewd guess as to the true state of the case. Frankie had driven to the "House," seen Mr. Grendale, and warned him in a friendly and entirely charming manner of the folly of making his wife a political confidante.

My words calmed the poor little woman. She wept copiously, but consented to be helped on with her cloak, and allowed me to send Skinner for a hansom.

"Take my advice, Dollie," I said earnestly, "don't attempt any explanations with your husband. Just kiss him and say you're sorry."

She promised to follow my advice, and, much relieved, I saw her depart.

Frankie was standing at the dining-room door as I passed down the hall. She was flushed, and there was a look of anxiety on her face that startled me. It was very rarely Frankie showed anxiety.

"Come in," she said, "Hartland wants to talk to you." She took my hand and squeezed it. "Don't give me away, Cynthia," she whispered, "for the love of Heaven."

Lord Kinross was standing by the window. Frankie settled herself in a lounge chair and motioned to him to speak.

"If Cynthia is to be scolded," she said, "you must do it—I shan't."

"I think Cynthia deserves to be scolded," said his lordship. He smiled as he spoke, but I didn't like his manner all the same.

"I understand you've found my cousin Percival a little trying lately, Cynthia. I've found him so myself at times." Kinross paused. "He has some letters of yours, I understand, letters which you wish to get back from him? Ask Hope himself to return them."

Kinross looked keenly at me. I felt myself turn crimson. I had written two or three times to Percival thanking him for flowers, etc., short, almost curt notes; nothing in any one of them that the whole world might not see. Why should I desire their return?

"Your cousin tells me you asked her to induce Pettigrew to use his influence with Hope to get these letters. Surely it would have been better to have asked Percival himself—why didn't you? Come, Cynthia, don't be childish, you must have some answer to give me. I owe it to my cousin to ask you for an explanation. Perhaps"—he paused—"have you already asked Percival to send back your letters?"

"No," I gasped. "No."

"Do you think he would refuse?"

I shook my head.

"Why, then, did you beg Frankie to go to-night and urge Pettigrew to get the letters at any cost?"

With a shock I realised what my cousin had done. To save herself from Hartland's anger she had pretended that she went to Pettigrew on my behalf. *Mine!* I flashed a look of indignation and reproach at her.

"Don't tell," she motioned, with her eyes, her hands, "*don't tell!*"

Unable to show anger to her I turned upon his lordship.

"You have no right to question me," I said. "You have no control over me nor my affairs."

"Pardon me, I have this right. I am your cousin's future husband; as such I will not permit her to commit indiscretions even for your sake. It was a glaring indiscretion to call on Pettigrew. I will not have it repeated. You understand?"

My cheeks burnt and my heart grew hot at the contempt in his voice. I threw up my head, and returned his look.

Proudly, defiantly, silently I would screen my cousin; for her sake I would consent to be misjudged, but not even for her could I acknowledge that Lord Kinross had a right to question me.

"As for the letters," he continued, "I will speak myself to Percival upon the matter."

But that I could not endure.

"You will do so in your own name, not in mine," I cried. "I send no message to Percival Hope through you. If you speak to him it will be not at my request, but from your love of interference. I *dare* you to tell Percival I want my letters."

Kinross shrugged his shoulders.

"As you like," he said coldly, "but in no case will I have your cousin dragged into the affair. Frankie"—he turned to her—"I have your word that you will not interfere again in the matter?"

My cousin nodded.

"That's right. We'll say no more about it. And now, my dear," he went to her side and laid his hand upon her shoulder. "There is one thing I want to speak to you about. I must prohibit you betting, Frankie, either on horses or at cards."

"I'm not so terrible a gambler as all that, Hartland."

"In future you are not to gamble at all," he said firmly. "Have you any bills still unpaid?"

"A few."

"Let me have a list in the morning. I will settle them. Also"—he paused—"are you in debt, Frankie? I mean do you owe much money to tradesmen and people like that?"

"Of course I do, till quarter day. I settle my accounts every three months. A tradesman in this locality would take it as an insult if you offered to pay him cash."

"How many unpaid bills are there left from last quarter, Frankie?"

My cousin laughed.

"You're terrible, Hartland. I confess I'm extravagant and get into debt, but who doesn't?"

"What do you owe, Frankie?". He took out his cheque-book and looked at her expectantly.

Frankie flushed.

"I think that's hardly your affair at present," she said slowly.

"Anything that effects you must of necessity be my affair," he answered gravely. "You've confessed you're extravagant, and I know you're short of money. I'm going to pay some into your bank, and I

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## CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA.

want to know how much will put you straight. Don't oppose me, Frankie. I'm not going to scold you, but I won't have it said that the lady I'm engaged to marry can't pay her butcher or the baker."

"Somebody's been talking against me. Who is it, Hartland?"

"Nobody. I shouldn't allow such a thing. Let us return to the bills. How much, Frankie?"

He spoke with more determination than I had ever seen him show. It was evident that if Frankie did not give way to him upon the point, it would make a serious breach between them.

That was the last thing my cousin wished to bring about. With a shrug and a smile she yielded.

"Two thousand will put me straight, Hartland," she said.

He wrote out a cheque for the amount.

"That will pay all your bills?"

"All," she answered with an emphatic nod.

I happened to know such a sum would but settle half my cousin's liabilities, and I wondered that she should have neglected the opportunity of clearing herself of debt. But I never *could* understand Frankie. I could only wonder at her.

"I shall pay another thousand into your account," Lord Kinross continued, "so that you will have some cash to go on with till next quarter day. You receive your dividends from Jamaica then?" He glanced at her keenly..

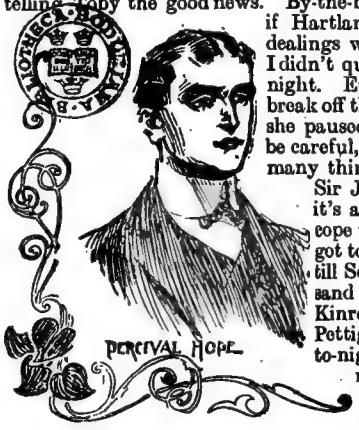
"Yes, dear, every quarter punctually," said Frankie. "And now I think you've lectured me enough. Don't look cross, Hartland, it doesn't suit you. I'll pay my debts and I'll forego gambling, and I'll lead a steady, sober, and righteous life. Will that please you?"

"Entirely. Don't forget. Frankie, you've got to turn over a new leaf." He parted from her affectionately, but bestowed only a cool good-night on me.

"Don't look so tragic, Cynthia," said my cousin, as the door closed behind him. "It isn't as if you really cared for Percival. Even if you do, what I said won't harm you. Kinross isn't likely to mention the letters after the way you snapped him up. It was a terrible predicament for *me*, dearie. I think I got out of it very cleverly."

I made no answer. Remonstrance as to her conduct was useless, but I could not bring myself to offer her congratulations.

"I'm glad you got that Grendale woman off so quietly," Frankie went on. "I managed that affair beautifully! Don't worry, Cynthia; 'poor Horace' will forgive dear Dollie this time. I've seen to that. I must go down to Nathan's in the morning. You shall have the pleasure of telling Toby the good news. By-the-bye, Cynthia, I wonder if Hartland has heard I've had dealings with the money-lenders? I didn't quite like his manner to-night. Even now I believe he'd break off the engagement if——" she paused.. "I shall have to be careful," she said, "there are many things he mustn't know. Sir John, Toby, Grendale—it's almost more than I can cope with. Worst of all, I've got to get through from now till September on four thousand pounds — three from Kinross and a thousand from Pettigrew—he paid me six to-night. If I try to raise money Kinross will hear of it. I know what that would mean," she added, catching her breath. She rose from her chair, and paced the room in silence.




"Suppose we shut the house up and go into the country for a bit?" I suggested.

"Impossible. I can't leave town till the end of July, and we're only at the beginning. I've a difficult game to play, Cynthia, and for once the luck's against me."

Frankie's difficulties seemed to increase instead of lessening. Toby, relieved from the nightmare of Nathan's bill, recovered his spirits, and took to haunting the house and my cousin more persistently than ever. At last Kinross remonstrated.

"Ffolliott's here a great deal too much, Frankie," he said. "I don't like it. It's very well to say he's only a boy; other people don't think so. You must give him his marching orders, Frankie, or I shall interfere."

Frankie listened, angry and impatient. Kinross was displaying an unlooked-for strength of character. Of old, he had been easy-going, tolerant, amiable. Now he was as exacting and imperious as Percival himself. I wondered at the time if Mr. Hope had a hand in his lordship's new development. Frankie must, I thought, have felt the contrast between the faith, the utter and complete faith Sir John had always shown her, and the constant, and, at times, ill-concealed suspicions of Lord Kinross. Not that Hartland was wanting in affection; at times he was passionate in his love and admiration. But the old doubt was ever there, clouding his brightest moments. The doubt that cloyed the sweetness of her kisses darkened the radiance of her smile, making her very beauty seem less fair.

For more reasons than one, however, Frankie realised that she must give Toby his *congé*.

She came to the conclusion that Toby would be the better for a sojourn on the Continent, so she determined to get him a post at one of our foreign embassies. To that end she cultivated Horace Grendale with much tact and considerable assiduity.

That astute politician was charmed to accept her friendship. He had reason, so he thought, to feel very kindly towards Mrs. Norton. Owing to her intervention, his wife's volubility had been checked in time. Otherwise the consequences might have been serious. Pettigrew, I may mention, had conducted his Stock Exchange negotiations with skill and secrecy. No one ever discovered from whom he gained his information.

"If you could use your influence for young Ffolliott, Mr. Grendale, I should be awfully grateful." My cousin looked into Horace's eyes with a beautifully pathetic expression. "He's a nice boy, you know, and ought to do well. But," she paused, "he's foolish, and fancies himself in love, and—" she hesitated, "I've felt quite motherly towards him, Mr. Grendale. I assure you it was a terrible upset to me when I found out he'd mistaken my feeling for something different. I'm sure you understand, you're so sympathetic. Thank you," as Horace took her hand, doubtless to show his sympathy. "I knew you'd help me. And you think St. Petersburg? It's the only vacancy? Well, it's a long way, but perhaps that's all the better. When he's there he'll learn wisdom and forget me."

"The first he may do in time. The second"—Horace bowed over her hand—"is impossible."

Toby took his dismissal quietly.

"I fully understand," he said bitterly, "you've no further use for me, and so I have to go. You've heaps of admirers, Frankie, and your lovers are plentiful as blackberries. But there's this difference between me and the rest—they love and they admire you—why? Because they don't know you. But I," he paused, and drawing her to him clasped her in his arms. "I know you through and through. You're bad, bad as can be, and yet I love you, love you with every fibre of my body, and shall do so to my death. You'll send for me yet, Frankie, and when you do you'll find me ready. Kiss me a last kiss, a kiss from the woman who has ruined me." He drew her closer, and, with a cry of pity, she raised her face and clasped him round the neck.

And then he left her.

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Toby Ffolliott had passed out of her life and mine.

Kinross increased his vigilance as time went on. Frankie was held accountable for every hour of the day. If she ventured to go out unchaperoned there were black looks. She must neither drive, nor walk, nor call unattended. Lady Gaveston cordially approved of his lordship's stringency, and I am bound to say aided him to the best of her unamiable ability.

Frankie commenced to show signs of this severe treatment. She looked harassed, little lines crept into view about her mouth, and there were dark rings under her eyes.

"I can't bear it much longer, Cynthia," she said to me one night. "The suspense is killing. At any moment Kinross may hear how terribly I am involved in debt. Every post brings me letters demanding payment, some of the tradespeople have threatened to summon me. If only Kinross would go away for a bit I would raise some money and satisfy the most pressing claims. But he won't stir from me, and while he is in town I can do nothing. If he finds out that I deceived him about my debts he'll throw me over, and yet I can't move hand or foot to get the money to pay them. I sometimes think he has me watched; I can go nowhere without his discovering it."

"When do we leave town, Frankie?"

"We're due at Cowes in three weeks," she answered, "but unless I can manage to stave off my creditors we can't go at all."

The day after this conversation Frankie developed a headache. It came about three in the afternoon, just as we were about to start for Hurlingham, to see a polo match in which Chesterton was to take part. Kinross was much upset by my cousin's sudden indisposition, and talked about giving up the expedition. Frankie would not hear of such a thing, and finally, yielding to persuasions, he consented to go with me and Lady Gaveston, leaving Frankie to lie down in a darkened room.

When I returned that evening I found Frankie much improved in health and spirits.

"I've raised some cash, my dear," she said. "I gave my maid a holiday, and while the household thought me peacefully sleeping I slipped out, the key of my door in my pocket. How did I get the cash? Borrowed it on my jewels. I simply haven't got a trinket left! Hartland's diamonds and Fluffy's pins all had to go. I've not sold them, silly," as I gazed at her, in horrified amazement. "I can get them again when I pay the money. How much? Three thousand; enough to give me breathing time, at any rate."

Frankie's appearance at dinner next evening devoid of any jewellery created something of a sensation. Rich ornaments became her infinitely; hers was a beauty that could stand a costly setting. But she had never looked more lovely than that night, gowned in white and silver, lilies in her hair and at her breast.

Kinross approved her new-found simplicity. He grew quite enthusiastic about "beauty unadorned." But after a time he tired, or grew suspicious of the change.

"Why don't you wear the diamonds I gave you, Frankie?" he questioned; "what has become of that turquoise bracelet I sent you?"

My cousin parried the inquiries with naive quickness, but at last he would no longer be put off. He expressed a hope that she would on no account appear at Lady Daventry's party without the diamonds. It was to be an immensely swagger function, the last event of the season.

My cousin could not get the diamonds under two thousand pounds, the party was in ten days' time, and Kinross was more devoted in his attendance than ever.

Providence, in the person of one of Hartland's aunts, interposed on my cousin's behalf. The aunt in question was taken ill and wired to Kinross to come to her at Como. His lordship reluctantly obeyed.

Frankie, in the height of good spirits at her freedom, wired to Pettigrew to come and take her out to dinner. He turned up about half-past seven, with him a young American named Vernon P. Slade, a professional billiard player.

"It's sweet of you to come," said Frankie. "I propose we go to the Carlton, I want a real good time."

We had an awfully jolly evening. Vernon P. Slade was quite a charming person, and Pettigrew waxed enthusiastic over his marvellous skill with the cue.

"There isn't a player to touch him in England, Mrs. Norton, amateur or professional. There is only one man who can come within a mile of him, and that's your friend Chesterton. I watched him play the other evening at the club."

"Why not get up a match between him and your friend?" she said, laughing. "I won't own England can be beaten, even at billiards, without a trial. I'll back Chesterton to any extent."

"That's real sportsmanlike of you, Mrs. Norton," said Pettigrew approvingly. "If the match comes off I'll lay £3,000 upon Slade."

"I'll put a simliar amount on Chesterton. I don't bet as a rule, you know, Mr. Pettigrew, but in a case like this where one's patriotism is involved, I can't refuse."

"I'll see Chesterton to-morrow to fix it up," said Pettigrew.

Frankie smiled assent, and leaving Pettigrew for me to entertain, turned her fascinations upon Slade.

He was a good-looking fellow, there was character in his square jaw and steady eye. With all the quickness and avidity of the Yankee, his manner was quiet, his expression imperturbable. He did not fall a very easy victim to my cousin, but parried her soft speeches with wonderful self-possession. But I was not surprised—it was no more than I had expected, when in the course of a week he surrendered at discretion, and became a constant visitor to Pont Street.

The match between Slade and Chesterton was arranged to take place the evening before Lady Daventry's party. Frankie had written and told Kinross that for this once she felt compelled to disobey him, and had backed his friend for all she was worth. Hartland condoned the offence, and hoped to be back in time to see Chesterton carry all before him. In any case, he would return for Lady Daventry's affair.

The day before the match I discovered Slade and my cousin in a close and confidential attitude—she had clasped her hands round his arm and was gazing at him intently.

"It isn't much for you to do," she said; "one defeat won't spoil your reputation. Consider the match is purely a friendly affair."

"I've played a straight game all my life, Mrs. Norton," he said quietly, "and I always shall. If, as you say, you have backed Chesterton so heavily, that you will be unable to meet your losses, why don't you hedge? You can put an equal amount on me, you know, and that will make you safe either way."

"I can't—Lord Kinross would never forgive me. Besides, there's no one to take the offer. It's a purely friendly match, as I told you before."

Slade paused. "I'm terribly sorry for you," he said at last. "I'm not a rich man, Mrs. Norton, but if a few hundreds would help you?"

"Not a bit of use," she interrupted hastily.

"Well, then, I can do nothing. It's quite possible," and he smiled, "that I may be in bad form, or Chesterton may put up

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a better game than I anticipate. For your sake, I will hope for the worst."

He smiled again and pressed her hand. But for all his soft words he was adamant. Frankie could not move him.

At length the evening of the match arrived. It was to be held at Chesterton's house in Manchester Square, where there was a splendid billiard room. Frankie was resplendent in a wonderful gown of wine-coloured silk, veiled with rich lace, and held her head high despite her fears.

"I shan't be able to get my diamonds back in time to wear at Lady Daventry's if Slade wins," she remarked. "Kinross will surely discover what I have done with them. And then"—she shrugged her shoulders. "At all events," she added, "I mean to have a merry night even if it's my last."

The billiard room was very large and lofty and flooded with electric light. The green tables, the polished ivory balls, exercised a fascination over me, and when the game commenced I was fully as excited as the rest.

Three games under American rules were to be played of 200 up. Chesterton scored first with a break of 20. Slade followed with a break of 36. The Englishman, who was in fine form, rapidly ran up to 150. Slade failed to catch him up, and Chesterton, as Pettigrew said, romped in an easy winner of the first round.

The second game Slade made a brilliant start; he took and kept the lead, beating Chesterton by 50.

The third game was the most exciting. Each had scored a victory. This was a final test.

Chesterton played cautiously, his score crept slowly but surely to 80, 90, 100. The balls rolled monotonously, again and yet again, till his score nearly touched 150. It would take some skill on Slade's part to beat his record.

The American, with a tense look on his face, made a succession of brilliant strokes. He soon passed the first hundred and reached the second. He had eighty-five to make to win.

"He moistened his lips with his tongue and glanced towards the side-board where there was an array of decanters.

"Let me mix you something, Mr. Slade," said Frankie. "I'm a very good hand at American drinks. What do you say to a cocktail?"

"Thanks, very much, I should like it immensely!" he replied.

Frankie set about compounding the mixture. She took rather a long time over the business. The flavouring wouldn't come right, she said.

"It tastes first-class," said Slade. He drank it, and returned to the table.

For a while his play was brilliant as before, gradually, however, his wrist seemed to lose its power, he all but missed a stroke, and looked very white and fagged.

"You might open the window, the room is awfully hot!"

He looked so bad that Chesterton suggested he might like a rest, but he would not hear of it.

"I'm all right," he said irritably; "there's nothing the matter with me."

He took up the cue and struck wildly, sending the balls in all directions but the right. The game was over, Chesterton had won.

"Never saw such a smash-up in my life!" said Pettigrew. "What's come to you, Slade?"

"I'm beaten, that's all," said the American, too much of a sportsman to acknowledge that he was feeling awfully bad.

"You're ill, old chap!" Chesterton took his arm and led him from the room. Frankie and I were left with Pettigrew.

"Can't understand it a bit," said Hiram. "Never witnessed such a collapse in my life. It's just as if he was dying or faint or something!

"I shouldn't wonder if your cocktail made him queer, Mrs. Norton," he said joking. "English women don't know how to mix a drink."

Laughing, he took up Slade's glass—there was still a little of the mixture left—and examined the contents.

He tasted, and seemed to like the taste but little. His face grew very grave.

"It's very queer," he said, shaking his head, "very queer. Why," he dropped the glass and faced round quickly, "I believe it's drugged, and you"—he walked to Frankie and seized her wrist—"yes, you have drugged it!"

*(What happens to Frankie will be told next Tuesday. This series began in No. 702 of Short Stories. Back numbers may be ordered through any newsagent.)*

# IN THE MIDST OF LIFE.

**Beginning with a Tragedy and Ending with a Honeymoon.**

"By just half a minute, sir," said the porter.

For the moment the man did not answer.

It was evident that he was more than vexed, that he was irritated and angry at his failure to catch the train.

He was a fairly well set-up man, of an age that it was hard to determine. Wrapped in a long, roomy, travelling cloak, the collar turned up above his ears, and wearing a big, black, soft felt hat, his face was all but indistinguishable.

He was too upright, too alert for an old man, but the deep, firm tones of his voice, as he at length addressed the sympathetic official, indicated someone with more than the usual share of decision of character, good or bad.

"The train just gone," he said, "is the very last which could possibly put me on board the *Campania* for New York, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir! The next will be just too late, by three hours."

"Um! Well, it can't be helped; get me a cab!"

His bidding was done, the two great cabin trunks being re-hoisted on to the roof of the "growler."

"Where to, sir?" asked the porter, tip-expectant.

"Ah! That's just it!" re-echoed the man.

"Beg pardon, sir! Where you came from, perhaps, sir!"

The man's face became absolutely livid; while he himself seemed suddenly to be transformed into hard, dumb stone.

Then the fit changed, and his face became scarlet with passion, his eyes almost bolting out of his head; he clenched and unclenched his hands as he flung words at the unfortunate porter, like as they had been deadly missiles.

"There! Tell me, you rascal! Why I should go there!"

"I can't tell you!" returned the nettled railway official; "and as to being a rascal, keep your bad language for somebody else as like's it better nor I do."

"Why, you impudent, loafing scoundrel! I'll complain to your masters and have your coat from off your back!"

The porter, as if determined to keep his temper, and so be on the prudently right side, made no reply, but having done his duty with regard to the luggage, walked away to another and newly-arrived cab. The man was about to enter his own vehicle when his Jehu roughly asked for directions.

The fare looked at the driver, who repeated his inquiry with an impatient insistence, which served, however, to irritate the other still more.

"Where to?" he snarled viciously. "Drive towards

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Paddington. Go along the New Road and—and Talbot Street, and I'll tell you when to stop."

"Talbot Street!" exclaimed cabby, half turning round. "Why that's where——"

"Never mind!" sharply interrupted the man, "do as you're told, and keep your remarks to yourself!"

Outside the station boys were shouting out the contents of the noon editions of the halfpenny evening papers.

"Terrible murder! Man stabbed to death in an hotel in the West End! Murder!"

The man in the four-wheeler leant out of the cab window and beckoned to a boy.

"*Evening Express* there!"

"Here y'are, sir! Terrible murder, sir!"

"Give me the paper, you noisy young blackguard! There's the money!" throwing a penny into the road.

"Who're you callin' a blaggard? You're a nice old cup o' tea, *you* are!"

The boy's abuse followed the cab, but the man, though he must have heard it till it died away in the distance, took no notice, but sat well back in the shadow, his eyes fixed on the paragraph which described the tragedy at Blacklock's Private Hotel, Talbot Street, Edgware Road.

* * * * * * *

Two women, by their striking likeness to one another, obviously sisters, sat at the open window of a second floor front room of number twenty-three, Talbot Street, Edgware Road.

But in spite of the likeness between the two there was as noticeable a dissimilarity.

One, evidently the elder, expressed in the lines of her face, in the sad look in her eyes, and in her careworn appearance generally, the strain of responsibility and thought for others.

The younger girl was, or seemed to be, altogether different.

A complete contrast in appearance to her sister, she was tall and fair beyond the ordinary, and in every way of a more intellectual, if restless, type of character.

"Gracie," the latter was saying, "I cannot rest. I think I shall go out."

"Go out, Rita! You know this is your rest day! Don't, please don't!"

"Nonsense, dear. I will just stroll and meet Leo; he always walks home on Saturday afternoons, and I shall be sure to catch him the left side of Oxford Street near the Circus."

"Well, I think Leo Bryant ought not to encourage you, Rita, in playing these mad pranks," said Grace Ellington. "You never seem to be for five minutes together in your home. He imagines that just because he, as a man and a journalist, is under the necessity of being abroad at all hours, and can do it with impunity, you, a mere girl, can do the same, and with like results."

"And Leo is right, you dear old fidget! Any way, I'm going, and we shall be back in a couple of hours, in time for an early cup of tea."

As Rita Ellington quietly closed the street door behind her, and halted a moment on the bottom step to button her glove, a four-wheel cab, with two heavy trunks on the top, passed slowly up the street.

As it passed where she stood, the white, black-bearded face of a man appeared at the window nearest her.

It was only for an instant that she saw it, but long enough to be able to recognise it.

For she remembered that only the night before, while as on this afternoon sitting at the open window of their front room, she had seen about half-past twelve, at the centre, second-floor window of the hotel opposite, the same white, black-bearded face pressed for a second against the window pane.

At the time it had startled her by reason of its expression of weird terror and horror-stricken apprehension.

Mixed, too, with this coward look was a cruel, vindictive glint in the eyes, which she could plainly see in the light of the moon that beamed down from overhead, sheer between the two sides of the street upon the centre of the roadway.

Now up the street came the raucous voices of the newsboys, crying out—"Terrible murder in the West-end! Murder of a gentleman in a Private Hotel in Talbot Street, Edgware Road! Paper!"

They had kept the affair very quiet over the way; for although a certain amount of unusual bustle and running to and fro had been noticeable, not a whisper of the fact had leaked out, until it was made public through the evening early editions.

Rita Ellington had that rare gift among women of being able to come to logical conclusions on most matters, and this gift it was that caused her to take these two separate views of a man's face, and to make of them two well-forged, unbreakable links which should connect themselves with the murdered man still lying in the centre, second-floor room of Blackstock's Private Hotel.

And the man in the cab went on his way, little heeding that a woman's wit was awake to follow in his footsteps; that a woman's hand was set to the task, from which she would not, because she could not shrink.

* * * * * * *

Rita Ellington never did anything like the majority of other girls, and when, therefore, walking on and on, she failed to meet her lover, she did not hesitate to make the whole journey to Fleet Street right to the door of the office of the *Daily Phonograph*, the journal upon the staff of which Leo Bryant was a special news reporter.

"No, Miss!" said the commissionaire, in reply to her inquiry. "Mr. Bryant isn't here; he went away in a cab more than two hours ago."

"You don't know if he is likely to be back here, do you?"

"Can't say Miss! But as he's gone on that West End murder case, near Edgware Road, it's sure to be very late when he does come."

"I might have guessed that he would have been detailed," said Grace, half to herself and half to the doorkeeper. "Well, please tell Mr. Bryant, if he should come, that I called—Miss Ellington—and—and that's all. Good afternoon!"

She stood a moment in the doorway, undecided as to whether she should walk home or take a cab. The latter was somewhat in the nature of an unwonted luxury, and she was on the point of bracing herself to face the inevitable, when a hansom dashed up, a young fellow, tall, stiffly-built, and breathless almost with energy, descending quickly from it, and well-nigh knocking Rita down in the semi-darkness of his impetuosity.

"Rita! What's brought you right up here?"

"Nothing of any importance, Leo, except that—that something I cannot quite explain, is worrying me a bit."

"Well, I shall not be ten minutes, go into the room there on the right of the passage and I will come to you, and we'll go home together."

Leo Bryant was a first-floor lodger in twenty-three Talbot Street, the house where the Ellington girls lived.

In less than ten minutes he came and bore her off into the crowded street, and, as they decided to walk, they soon found themselves in Holborn, with their faces set westward.

"Do you know the job I'm on, dear?" he asked her abruptly.

"That alleged murder case at Blackstock's in our street, isn't it?"

"Yes, but how did you find out?"

"The old doorkeeper at your office told me."

"Ah, of course. Well, Rita, it is one of the most extraordinary cases I have ever had to tackle, and my experience, for a youngster, hasn't been so limited. It completely fogs me."

"Do they suspect anybody?"

"Well, there's the rub! There is absolutely no one upon whom they can lay a finger as having been likely, from motive

or interest, to kill this man. Except, perhaps, a man who left the hotel this morning, and there is really nothing definite to connect him with the crime."

"Leo, you love me very much? At least you say you do, so I suppose I must believe it."

"My darling, you know that I love you better even than life itself."

"Then, if love be life, we—you and I, Leo—shall live for ever, because my faith is that love can never die."

"Dear heart!" said Leo tenderly, and inclining his head towards her, so that her hair touched his cheek. (They were passing through quiet Staple Inn, so the caress was possible). "What ails you to-day? And what earthly connection can there be between this wretched murder case and you and me?"

"More, perhaps, than we should care to acknowledge, dear," she answered him.

That her strange manner should startle him was not wonderful, seeing that Grace had told him more than once of her sister's almost unnatural proneness of late to do and say things peculiar and out of the common.

"What makes you think so, dearie?" he asked, without putting too much earnestness into the query. He knew that if he was to be successful in guiding her mind back into a calmer and quieter channel, it must be by refusing to take her too seriously.

"Only something I saw last night, and something else that I saw a couple of hours ago. But, Leo, if I told you what I think these two things really mean, you would simply laugh at me, and so—well, I won't tell you."

"That is unkind, dear!"

"No, Leo, there may be nothing in it after all, and should that be so, I should regret having said anything to you about it."

"You will at least tell me why you put that question to me just now as to my love for you?"

"Oh, I don't know, dear; I fancy it was because in case anything should happen to me—to us—it is pleasant to know that love, at least, is deathless."

"Happen to you! What can happen?"

"Who knows? But there, dear, we won't discuss the subject further. I am not quite myself to-day, and maybe it is all fancy on my part and foolish moonshine."

"Very well, my darling, if it pleases you to say nothing—say nothing. We will hail the first hansom, and get home in double-quick time."

At the corner of Tottenham Court Road they found a hansom, and in a quarter of an hour were landed at Talbot Street.

"Remember!" said Leo to her as they parted in the hall, "you are not to worry your poor little head with any theories, good, bad, or indifferent on the subject of this hotel affair!"

Before having his tea Bryant crossed the street, and exchanged a few words with the policeman on special duty outside the hotel opposite.

He knew that the body of the murdered man, upon whom nothing had been found by which he could be identified, had been within the past two hours removed by the police to the nearest mortuary, yet on the chance that anything fresh in the shape of explanatory evidence might have transpired and which he could add as late "copy" to his already delivered-in account, he thought it advisable to "tap" the constable ahead of the other newspaper scribes.

The officer knew the *Daily Phonograph's* special reporter and responded readily to his inquiries.

"No, sir, there's nothing new, and I don't fancy as there will be."

"Well, if anything turns up, you know where I live; just run across and knock me up, wil you?"

"Right you are, sir! Thank you, sir!"

This was for the customary tip, which in these cases is always a source of strength to the pressman angling for news.

Seeing that there was nothing more to be gleaned, Leo Bryant went in, had his tea, and a pipe, and sat by the open window in company with his thoughts.

* * * * *

It was just after filling his second pipe that young Bryant imagined he heard the street door shut to, but, quick as he was, he failed to see more than the back of a woman walking rapidly up the street towards the main road.

For an instant he thought it looked like Rita. To make sure, he ran upstairs and knocked at the Ellington's sitting-room door.

Grace opened it.

"Has Rita gone out?" Leo asked.

"Gone out! No! She went to bed directly after her tea."

"Then it couldn't have been her," he said, half-musingly. "Would you mind, Grace, making sure that she is in? I'm a bit anxious about her. That's all!"

Grace Ellington came quickly back again, her face white with apprehension.

"You are right, Leo. She *is* out. Oh, where can she be? What can she be doing?"

"Stay you there, Grace! I'll go and look for her."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before, seizing a cap, he was down the stairs and out into the street.

"Did you see which way that lady turned who left twenty-three just now?" he asked his friend the policeman.

"The young lady as you came in with awhile ago, sir? Oh, yes, when she got to the top of the street she turned to the right, Kilburn way!"

"Thanks! Good night!" and Leo Bryant sprinted for all he was worth in the same direction.

To keep his eyes on both sides of the road, in his search for Rita, was no easy matter, the thoroughfare being even more than usually crowded.

As he neared Maida Vale, however, it got quieter, but not a trace of Rita could he see.

Kilburn reached and without any result, he felt both alarmed and at a total loss what to do.

Then it suddenly occurred to him to hark back, as it was improbable that Rita should have made so long, and apparently so purposeless a journey.

On his return to Talbot Street he was met with the news of the arrest of the alleged murderer of the man at Blackstock's.

"It's only a case of suspicion," said the policeman to Leo, "but pretty thick suspicion at that. If it don't hang him, may I never get my stripes!"

It appeared that the police, who naturally suspected the prisoner, but lost track of him after his missing of the boat train, came up with their quarry just as he was boarding the Havre steamer. He made no resistance, and at the moment no statement.

Leo Bryant's first duty being to his paper, he collected all the information relative to the case, posted off with it to Fleet Street, and did not inquire about Rita till his return.

The story he had to hear was most extraordinary.

In the first place he learnt that Rita had returned within an hour after his departure in quest of her, refusing to go to bed until she had seen him and spoken with him.

Late though it now was, he found both sisters up, and evidently waiting for him. In his position as Rita's promised husband,

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no one of the three saw anything out of the way in his sitting and talking with the girls at this hour.

"Leo, I have seen my father to-night!" were Rita's first words.

He thought almost that she was ill, for he knew, as a matter of fact, that Mr. Ellington had not been heard of for ten years or more, he having some time before his wife's death sailed for parts unknown.

"Your father, dear! Why——!"

"Yes, I know, but I have not seen him alive, Leo—but dead—in the mortuary at Church Street."

"Good Heavens—have you been there to-night? And your father?"

"He is the man murdered at Blackstock's last night. I cannot exactly say what it was that impelled me to go and see—see—him, except, perhaps, that I have lately been thinking much of poor old thoughtless dad."

"Do you know that they have caught the man who is said to have killed him?"

"The man I saw at the window—the man I saw in the cab! There is nothing extraordinary in it. A child could have pieced so easy a criminal puzzle together."

* * * * *

In his subsequent confession the prisoner, Sylvanus Hemp, told a remarkable tale.

He and the dead man had, it seemed, been partners on a "claim" in the Nevada silver fields.

The other, Robert Ellington, but known as Robert Pateman, discovered a rich "pocket," for a time keeping the discovery to himself.

Accidentally finding this out, Hemp planned to murder and rob Pateman, but the latter, secretly concealing his property, managed to elude his scheming partner and to make off coastwards.

Reaching New York—Hemp well on his track—he sailed for London, putting up on his arrival at Blackstock's.

There the two accidentally met and patched up a sort of peace. Hemp waited a favourable opportunity to effect his purpose, namely, the getting at the proceeds of his partner's "find" at any risk.

It came, he surprising Pateman when half asleep, and demanding a share of the money. On the other's refusal to disgorge a single coin, Hemp stabbed him with his own knife, which lay at hand upon a small table by the bed.

Hemp then left the house after paying his bill, deposited his luggage at a railway cloakroom, and kept quiet till it was time to catch the night mail for Liverpool.

He also in the interim bought a passage to New York at a London agency of the Cunard company.

That was all there was to be said about it, and he was now prepared to pay the penalty of unsuccessful crime.

This he did in due course.

* * * * *

A month or two after the events above related, a couple, evidently newly-married, took their seats in a second-class compartment of the limited mail at Euston.

The girl was tall and fair, and her companion had the look of one who might be relied upon in the tightest of emergencies.

"You're sure you are comfortable, dear?" said Leo Bryant.

"Comfortable, Leo! I'm simply happy, and that's better, for it includes the other."

"So it does, Rita, and all you have to do now is to forget everything that is connected with the old days, and let Gracie see that we are the happiest couple in the world."

"Dear old Gracie! She will be thinking of us all the time we are honeymooning in the Isle of Man."

"Well, I'll tell you what I did, dear. I told her on the quiet that we should expect her down in a week from to-day. Does that please you?"

"Leo!—it is just what I could have planned, but as your idea it is better than best."

As the train steamed out of the station he asked her:

"And you feel safe, darling?"

"Perfectly safe," she answered him, "now and for always."

**Ralph Enderby.**

# Is Your Birthday This Week?

*We have recently secured the services of a well-known astrologer, and below will be found his information for this week's birthdays.*

***September 16.*** — The year promises much annoyance and anxiety to those whose birthdays fall to-day. Losses in business and through false friends. Sickness in home circle.

Girls will need great care in their love affairs, and should act with extra caution and prudence.

The day is evil for marriage and pleasure parties; not good to engage maid servants.

A child born to-day will be careless, fond of pleasure, but of good understanding, and will get on in life by its wit.

***September 17.***—Those celebrating birthdays to-day will have a changeable and uncertain year. Unfavourable for those in employ; better for aged people, landlords, farmers, and builders.

Girls born in the early morning must beware of deceit from opposite sex.

The day is not good to ask favours, to speculate, or travel. Beware of accident near nine a.m. and five p.m.

A child born here will be fond of change, extravagant, and should keep in the employ of others.

***September 18.***—The year will be rather favourable for health, business, and finances. Some trouble in domestic circle.

Girls will meet with disappointment in love affairs and have some strange adventures if born near six p.m.

The day is good for commencing new undertakings, buying and selling, consulting lawyers, doctors, and military men.

A child born here will be fortunate with business; have an active mind and keen wit.

***September 19.***—An unfortunate birthday; the year will be full of change. Health will need care, and the temper should be kept well in hand.

Love affairs will bring worry and anxiety; not a good time to marry.

The day is evil for social affairs, letter writing, and dealing with aged people. Guard against chill and cold.

A child born to-day will be cunning and crafty, lack self-confidence, and will not make much headway in life.

***September 20.***—The influences for the year are not good; losses and worry in business. Do not lend to friends; avoid speculation.

Girls will find love affairs of a quiet order.

The day is not good to buy or speculate; good to study metaphysical subjects, visit palmists, and spiritualists.

A child born to-day will be improvident; the mind will be original and fond of mysticism.

***September 21.***—Rather favourable for business; beware of accident and law. The year will be fair for health and domestic affairs.

Girls will find love affairs very interesting, and, if engaged, may marry this year.

A child born here will be cheerful, quick, and rather fortunate in life. Should insure against accident.

***September 22.***—A favourable year for those in business; if in employ promotion is promised. The health will need some care.

Love affairs are rather promising to girls; those born near one p.m. will become engaged, or marry.

The day is good for asking favours, seeking employment, dealing with bankers and shipping agents.

**Asturel.**

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### Still Hope for Him.

MISS HOCKHEIMER: "No, Mr. Pinkenbergh, I am sorry, but I cannot marry you. I could never love a man with red hair." Mr. Pinkenbergh: "Dot vas notting. My barber tells me dot at the rate my hair is falling oudt I vill be completely bald in one year."

### More Bacteria.

MOTHER: "What's that smacking noise in the parlour?" Studious boy (who goes to school): "It's Ada and her young man exchanging microbes."

### Very Probably.

MRS. SMITH: "I declare this leg of mutton has shrunk away almost to nothing." Willie Smith: "Perhaps, mamma, it came off the same sheep as my flannel did."

### Nature Sure to Compensate.

ETHEL (looking at the statue of the Venus of Milo): "It seems to me, Maud, that the women in ancient times had larger waists than they have now!" Maud: "Well, perhaps the men had longer arms."

### The Youthful Cynic.

LITTLE DICK: "You can say what you please about boys, but men is polite, anyhow. Men always gives up their seats to ladies." Little Dot: "That's cause sittin' down makes their trousers bag at the knees."

### He Remained.

SHE (sadly): "Well, if we must part, let us part friends. Good-bye, and may all that's good go with you." He (decidedly): "If all that's good went with me you would not remain here." Then she smiled and laid her head on his shoulder, and he remained.

### Not a Laughing Matter.

LITTLE JOHNNY: "That young man who comes to see you must be pretty poor company. He hasn't any sense of humour." Sister: "Why do you think so?" Little Johnny: "I told him all about the funny way you rush about and bang doors when you get in a temper, and he didn't laugh a bit."

### Looking for Trouble.

LADY (to husband): "My dear, did you remember to order a ton of coal to-day?" Husband: "Yes." Lady: "And my shoes?" Husband: "Yes, and" (peering out of the window) "there is a truck backing up to the door now, but its too dark to see whether it has the coal or the shoes."

### Not Very Substantial.

MR. NEWEDD: "How is that, my love? Nothing in the house to eat? I gave you money this morning." Mrs. Newedd: "Yes, I know; but I ran against the most exquisitely charming dinner gong—awfully fashionable, you know—and I couldn't resist the temptation to buy it." "But what shall we do for dinner?" "We can listen to the gong."

### Just the Difference.

DAUGHTER (delightedly): "And did you really consent?" Father: "Consent? My stars! I had to. The man demanded your hand like a highwayman holding up a coach. Consent? My good gracious! I believe, from the way he looked and acted, he would have knocked me down if I hadn't." Daughter: "Oh, it can't be. You must have been dreaming. Why, when he proposed to me he trembled so that he could hardly speak, and he looked so weak and nervous I had to hurry up and say 'Yes' to keep him from fainting."

### Saved and Lost.

"I HEAR Smith has got married to a Naples lady." "Yes; he went south to save his lungs and lost his heart."

### The Cook's Question.

"I WONDER if his heart is fired—he calls here every night. I wonder—are his calls inspired by love or appetite?"

### A Tedious Business.

JUDGE (to prisoner): "We are now going to read to you a list of your former convictions." Prisoner: "In that case perhaps your lordship will allow me to sit down."

### The Initial Proceeding.

MR. BASHFUL: "If you were going to invite a young lady to go to the theatre, how would you begin?" Mr. Swiftly: "By pawning my watch to pay for the tickets."

### An Urgent Call.

SHE: "One of the legs of our sofa is broken. Will you come at once and mend it?" Carpenter: "I am very busy just now, miss. Won't to-morrow do?" "Oh, dear no. It must be ready by 7.30 this evening."

### The Meanest Man.

PENDENNIS: "Who is the meanest man you know?" Warrington: "Old Closefist. Whenever there is a crowd at the railway booking-office he always gets on the outside, so as to be the last to part with his money."

### Mr. Softly Left Hurriedly.

BOBBY: "My sister will be down in a few minutes, Mr. Softly; she's upstairs rehearsing." Mr. Softly: "W—what is s—she rehearsing, Bobby?" Bobby: "I don't know exactly; but she's standing in front of the mirror and blushing and saying, 'Oh, Mr. Softly—er—this is so sudden!'"

### Agricultural.

THE meek young agriculturist had been talking with great frankness to the handsome young woman, but she didn't quite believe him. "Oh," she exclaimed, "you are chaffing me!" "My dear young lady," he responded, "you were never more mistaken. With wheat at its present price, it would be an insult to offer you chaff."

### Amateur Golf.

FIRST YOUNG LADY (learning golf): "Dear me! What shall I do now? This ball is in a hole." Second Young Lady (looking over a book of instructions): "Let—me—see. I presume you will have to take a stick of the right shape to get it out." First Young Lady: "Oh, yes, of course, see if you can find one shaped like a dust-pan and brush."

### His Mother Could.

A CONJURER was recently performing the old trick of producing eggs from a pocket-handkerchief, when he remarked to a little boy in fun: "I say, my boy, your mother can't get eggs without hens, can she?" "Of course she can," replied the boy. "Why, how is that?" asked the conjurer. "She keeps ducks!" replied the boy, amid roars of laughter.

### Breaking it Gently.

"REALLY, Mr. Stalate," she protested, "you have given me four hours of your time this evening." "Why—er—upon my word! So I have. The hours pass like minutes when I am with you." "You were telling me that since your promotion your time is valuable." "Yes." "Well, papa doesn't allow me to accept expensive presents from young men."

### Unpremeditated.

MAIDEN AUNT: "I hope you did not make any chance acquaintances in the train, Maud?" Miss Maud Brisk: "I am sorry to say, auntie, that I sat for a little time in the lap of an Episcopal bishop, and watched a stockbroker stand on his head in the lunch basket of a total stranger." Aunt: "Horrors, child, what can you mean?" Maud: "It was not premeditated, I assure you, Auntie; but when our train collided with another, we were so upset by the shock that we were hardly responsible for what we did."

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# In Search of an Heiress.

**A Charming Little Story of a British Consul's Luck.**

The Hon. Philip Howard, bachelor, British Consul at Gon, never knew exactly how he succeeded in securing his appointment, but he did know that in applying for it, he had vaguely imagined that he was to have nothing to do except to draw his meagre salary and amuse himself. But, after six months at his post, he had made three important discoveries. Firstly, that there was a great deal of serious work to do; secondly, that he, being ignorant of the language, was absolutely incompetent to do it; and thirdly, that he was hopelessly in love with Mlle. Marcelle du Pont, the young lady whom he had engaged to teach him French. Marcelle du Pont was a sweet, gentle girl of twenty, with a fair face and a voice that breathed music. After the third lesson she saw the love-light in Philip's eyes.

"Mademoiselle," Philip said abruptly, "what is French for heart?"

"*Cœur, monsieur,*" she replied.

"*Bien,*" rejoined Philip; and how would you say 'with my whole heart?'"

"*De tout mon cœur, monsieur,*" Marcelle answered demurely.

"And how would you say 'I love you?'"

"*Je vous aime, monsieur.*"

"Good," cried Philip; then looking her squarely in the face, he said, "*Mademoiselle, je vous aime de tout mon cœur.*"

"Monsieur's accent is very bad," observed Marcelle naively.

But that was five months ago. Last night under the silent stars she had said to him, "*Oui, Philip, je t'adore,*" as only a French woman honestly in love could say it. Thus it was that Hon. Philip Howard, British Consul at Gon, on a salary of £300 a year, found himself engaged to be married to the prettiest and one of the poorest girls in French Switzerland, for Marcelle du Pont, although she gave music lessons, did not even own a piano. And, what was worse, Government changes were likely to take place in a few months, and Philip's tenure of office was already a dissolving view.

"It would be just like them to kick me out on my wedding-day," he groaned; "why haven't we got some money?" And Philip, with a heavy heart, turned to his London mail which had just arrived. Among other letters he found the following:

"London, Oct. 3, 189—. To the British Consul, Gon.

"Dear Sir,—The late William Markham, a merchant of this city, received some fifteen years ago from one of your predecessors a communication in regard to the case of a child, Eva Cottram, whom it appears was deserted by her mother at Nice in 1878, and who was subsequently taken to Gon by the nurse to whom her mother had intrusted her. The grandfather of this girl has just died and left her the bulk of his estate amounting to about £50,000. If you can find any trace of her at Gon, or elsewhere, we would be greatly obliged if you would communicate at once with the undersigned.

"Yours very truly, Bland and Jones, Solicitors."

"Why didn't I find Eva Cottram, the heiress, and fall in love with her instead of Marcelle du Pont, French teacher of music and languages?" grumbled Philip. Then he went to his bookcase and took down the great record-book bearing on the outside page this descriptive title:

"Record of Births—Deaths—Marriages and Other Happenings of Personal Interest in the Consular District of Gon. From 1876 to 189—."

As he was looking through the index, the door of the consulate opened and Mlle. du Pont entered.

"It is time for your lesson, Monsieur," she said, with a certain gentle reserve which she always maintained with Philip when acting in her capacity as his French teacher, even in spite of their engagement.

"You must let the lesson go to-day and help me with something else," said Philip. "Read this," and he handed her the letter he had just received, which Marcelle read with undisguised interest.

"It is an opportunity to make some money if you find her, is it not, Philip?" she cried enthusiastically. "Certainly she would be generous if you should put such a great fortune into her hands."

"I hope so," said Philip. "I think I might legally ask at least three per cent.; that would be £1,500."

"We need fear nothing with £1,500 in the bank."

"No," said Philip, "but we haven't discovered the girl's whereabouts yet, and I doubt if we ever shall."

Meanwhile he had turned to page 106 of the big record book. Here he found the following entry:

"COTTRAM—June 13, 1878: Eva Cottram, two years of age, born at Lucerne of English parents as attested by her birth certificate, was this day brought to this Consulate by one Marie Barbier, of No. 3 Rue des Grottes, Gon, who states that she was formerly employed as '*gouvernante*' at the Hotel des Anges, Nice; that on the 2nd day of March, 1878, there came to the hotel, Robert Cottram and Emily Cottram, his wife, and that they had with them their infant child, Eva; that they engaged her, the said Marie Barbier, as governess, and that she immediately entered into their service; that on the 6th day of April, Mr. and Mrs. Cottram left the hotel, saying they were going to Monte Carlo, that instead, they went to Paris; and from there wrote to her sending five hundred francs and begging her to keep their child until they came for it. They gave no explanation of their strange conduct, and in May, 1878, Marie Barbier saw an account of a railway wreck at Dijon, in France, and learnt that among the killed were Mr. and Mrs. Cottram. It is presumed that they were on their way back to Nice to get their child.

"(Signed) "Benjamin Hemmick, Consul."

A second entry was as follows:

"August 3, 1878.—Since making the above entry, I have communicated with William Markham, in London, father of Mrs. Robert Cottram, telling him of the presence of his grandchild here and asking him what disposition he desired should be made of the little one. He answered me curtly, stating that his daughter had eloped with a blackguard, and that he would assume no responsibility for the fruit of such a marriage. Mademoiselle Marie Barbier agrees to keep the child upon condition that she may adopt it as her own, to which I have consented, and she now has it in her possession. She is an honourable and industrious woman with some savings of her own and a respectable home at No. 3 Rue des Grottes.

"(Signed) Benjamin Hemmick. Consul."

"It is a very sad story," said Philip softly, as he finished reading the record aloud to Marcelle. "I hope I shall be able to find the poor girl; you must help me, Marcelle; we must look at once for Marie Barbier, the governess."

"I happen to know Mlle. Marie Barbier very well," said Marcelle quietly.

"What!" cried Philip. "Do you mean it?"

"Undoubtedly, monsieur," said Marcelle, "but she is no longer Marie Barbier; her name now is Marie Barbier du Pont. I have just left her, and she, too, had received a letter from London. She asked me to bring a paper and show you. Have the kindness to examine it, if you please."

"What is this?" cried Philip excitedly, as he hastily scanned the document which Marcelle had handed him.

"It is a birth certificate, Monsieur le Consul," answered Marcelle, "my own birth certificate. I am the adopted daughter of Marie Barbier du Pont," and as Philip read from the paper the name "Eva Cottram," she buried her head upon his shoulder and burst into tears. **B. A. Ridgley.**

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NEW SERIAL STARTS IN THREE WEEKS' TIME.

# OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By Henry Farmer.

### Tom Jackson Supplies a Link to the Chain.

"And that, gentlemen," said Crump, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, "represents my plan of campaign. I should be very grateful to either of you for any suggestions or improvements."

His two visitors shook their heads.

"Let it stand at that, Mr. Crump," said one of them, in a low voice.

After knocking, Mrs. Cobb entered with letters.

"The last post's just come in, Mr. Penworthy!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Cobb. We shall be going out after our suppers; but I have my key."

He sorted through his correspondence and selected a letter, addressed in pencil, and bearing the London post-mark. Its appearance suggested that it had been written under difficulties.

"From Grogan," said the little man, after Mrs. Cobb's departure. "Just listen to this, gentlemen: 'F. left his rooms this morning for Chancery Lane, and called in at Holbeck Chambers. Mr. Lewis Masters, Turf Accountant and Commission Agent not at home, but expected back to-morrow afternoon or evening. F. then proceeded to the Central Bank, and drew out about a hundred and fifty pounds in notes and gold. He is back at his rooms now. Am pencilling this not a stone's throw away.—G.'"

"It looks to me," commented Crump, as he tore up the letter, "very much as if there had been a split, and that Mr. Faversham meditates a trip abroad. This Mr. Lewis Masters, can either of you tell me anything about him?"

"H'm," said one of his visitors, "he does a big betting business. He calls himself Masters; but that's not his real name, and he's not an Englishman. He's a Dutchman, and his real name's Meister. He's got a partner who has offices at Flushing. A lot of English money goes over there."

"Exactly," said Crump thoughtfully. "Has Mr. Masters a clean sheet, do you know?"

"Yes, and no! He's never been convicted; but some little time ago he was brought up for paying a betting debt with bank-notes that had been stolen. However, he swore black and blue that they had come to him in the ordinary way of business, and there was no proof against him."

Crump's eyes seemed to light up suddenly. He opened his lips; then closed them with a snap. He had all but given utterance to a conclusion.

"Could you tell me," he said, after a pause, "what kind of a man this Masters is? I mean his character?"

"Well, I saw something of him when I was doing racecourse work. He's one of your blustering, bullying sort; but an arrant cur at heart."

"Thank you. That is a piece of information that may come in useful, if at some future time I should have dealings with him!"

"Mr. Crump," said the other detective eagerly, "might I ask what's passing through your mind?"

The little man hesitated.

"Wilcox," he said eventually, "if it should ultimately turn out that Mr. Lewis Masters was the medium through whom the diamonds and bank-notes, stolen from Mr. Mansfield's safe, were disposed, I should not be overwhelmed with surprise. But I will not commit myself further than this!"

There was a knock on the door, and Tom Jackson entered.

"Come in, Tom. Shut the door behind you. Let me introduce you. These two gentlemen, Inspectors Winton and Wilcox, have heard all about you and Fred."

Tom Jackson went stiff and saluted. They were great names, these! The inspectors nodded.

"Mr. Crump," said Winton, "has spoken very highly of you, Jackson."

The young constable flushed a little.

"Only carried out his orders, sir!"

"Anything to report, Tom?"

"I've just seen Railton. He's been questioning me about you, Mr. Crump!"

"Oh, indeed!" said the little man, a shadowy look of annoyance flitting across his face.

"Said he'd heard that Fred and I were chummy with you, and wanted to know what sort you were?"

"And you said?"

Tom flushed again.

"Well, you see, having an idea that he was a bit suspicious, I—I said, well, I said——"

Crump was chuckling now.

"Out with it, Tom!"

"Well, I said that you were a good-hearted, but rather a stupid old buffer!"

Crump threw himself back in his chair, and laughed himself red in the face.

"Good, Tom," he chuckled, "good! Stupid old buffer—good, very good indeed!"

Poor Tom looked very uncomfortable indeed.

"Then," he went on, "he wanted to know if you have ever been connected with the police force in any way!"

"And you said, Tom?"

"Nothing for a bit. I just laughed. That seemed to reassure him. Then I said that you'd no more been a policeman, than he, Railton, had been a cracksman. Then he laughed. And then, well, I spun a bit of a yarn about you having spent most of your life in the country, flower and fruit growing. And somehow, when I parted with him, he seemed happier in his mind."

Crump and the inspectors sighed in unison, sighs of relief.

"Anything else, Tom?"

"Nothing to do with The Firs; but you've heard me talk of old Rumbey that sometimes goes on the drink for a fortnight at a time, and prefers sleeping in ditches and hedges and the hollows of trees to a decent bed? He was so bad this evening that I had to take him to the station. It was a bit difficult to catch what he was saying, but it seems that he was sleeping in the wood that night poor Vance was drowned, and he kept on mumbling——"

Crump's eyes were glowing like stars.

"What?" he said sharply.

"Mind you, he's very much the worse for liquor; but he kept on mumbling something to the effect that he was in the wood on the night that Vance was drowned, and that if he had cared to come forward at the inquest, he could have told

coroner and jury something that would have opened their eyes for them, and given them something to think about: but when I asked what it might be, he turned nasty and showed fight. He's a queer sort, old Rumbey: He's thought by many not to be right in his head, and when he's in liquor, he carries on like a madman. They say that, many years ago, he was crossed in love, and that was what made him take to drink, and living like some wild man of the woods. They call him 'Old Hedgehog' in the village."

"And," questioned Crump, "he made no more definite statement than what you have just told us?"

"No."

"He will be brought up before the magistrates to-morrow?"

"Yes. It will be a matter of fourteen days."

Crump glanced at the inspectors.

"We shall know where to look for him then, and, perhaps, when he is sober, we shall be able to extract something more definite from him. I am much obliged to you, Tom, for this piece of information. It may prove that you have supplied me with a very much wanted missing link; though I mustn't allow myself to be too sanguine. Drunken men are prone to make irresponsible statements; yet it is remarkable how Rumbey's statement, vague as it is, corroborates certain discoveries and suspicions of mine."

He glanced again at the inspectors, who nodded significantly.

"But I think the time has come to enlighten you, Tom."

As yet Jackson knew nothing of Crump's suspicions on the subject of how Vance had met her death, nor of his investigations and discoveries; but before he left the cottage, he had been enlightened.

"A promising young fellow," said Crump, after his departure, "he and that rascally young nephew of mine are great favourites with me." He glanced at his watch. And now gentlemen, I think we have time to smoke one more pipe in comfort before sallying forth. The fact that Mr. Seaton Revelle is supposedly indisposed with influenza inclines me to think that we may not pass a fruitless night. But perhaps you would prefer cigars. Personally, I'm going to indulge in a strong cup of tea; but there is whisky on the premises for those who prefer it."

The inspectors voted for tea also. Mrs. Cobb had retired to bed, before Crump, having turned out the light, quietly led the way out of the cottage. The three men made their way towards The Firs together, only separating, according to a pre-arranged plan, when the building loomed out indistinctly through the dark, to take up their respective stations.

"I sincerely trust," were Crump's last words before parting with his colleagues, "that our efforts to-night will be attended with success!"

## SEATON REVELLE GETS UP AT MIDNIGHT.

Throughout the day Revelle had kept to his bed. The local doctor, who had been summoned, was rather puzzled as to the exact nature of his complaint, owing to the fact that his pulse was normal, and there was no feverishness; but his complainings of aching limbs and a violent headache, and "influenza" being a safe card for a doctor to play when in doubt, he had played it, as Revelle fully intended him to do. After the doctor's departure, Revelle had cracked a bottle of champagne, and smoked a couple of the cigars that were so highly approved of by Railton. This helped to while away the monotony of his self-imposed imprisonment.

He felt in need of a stimulant. He was conscious of a sense of failure; he was uneasy in his mind about Benny Beard. The languid air of unconcern that he had worn in the presence of his one-time partner had been a finely-assumed mask. Men's consciences, he repeatedly told himself, were uncertain, treacherous things sometimes. He regretted now that he had not come to a more definite understanding with Benny before his departure. And it was Esther that had awakened Benny's conscience. He felt the irony of it all, and inwardly writhed. It added to his bitterness. She had fooled him, he told himself, now she had caused a breach, possibly a dangerous breach, between him and his former partner and tool.

"When I've pulled off to-night's little business," he muttered half-aloud, "and if all goes well—pah! It's sure to go off all right; I've never yet made a mistake—I'll give Benny a look up, and have another little chat with him. He's not anything like such an arrant cur as Railton; but he isn't extraordinarily courageous. I'll rub it into him pretty severely. No. I don't think he would have the pluck to round on me, unless——"

He ground his teeth. But that was not likely to happen. He would not be likely to come in contact with Esther again. She was the danger. Those dark eyes of hers, with their wistful, unforgetting look might have a weakening, demoralising effect on Benny.

"He was always talking about them," he muttered irritably; "there's a wretched strain of maudlin sentimentalism in the fellow, and—that's the danger; but they're not likely to meet."

He rang the bell, and ordered Railton to bring him another bottle of champagne.

"You'll pardon me, sir, won't you? But is it advisable?" said the smooth-faced valet, a world of apology in his voice; "you have such a strenuous task before you to-night. Might I suggest, sir—I trust you will forgive the impertinence—that you refrain from further stimulant now; but, just before setting out, take one glass of champagne, with a dash of cognac in it."

Revelle laughed good-humouredly.

"You're a splendid servant, Railton. Your solicitude is almost paternal. You're quite right, though. And, Railton, when everything is settled up, you will find that I haven't forgotten you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"No," said Railton, on his return to the servants' quarters, "the master is anything but well. I hope the doctor's medicine will arrive soon."

The other servants retired to bed shortly after ten o'clock that night; Railton, having stated his intention of sitting up for some time at least, returned to his master's bedroom.

"Railton," said his master drowsily, "I'm going to put in a couple of hours' sleep; come and wake me at a quarter-past twelve."

"Very good, sir!"

Revelle was sleeping very peacefully when at the appointed time Railton crept silently into the room.

"Quarter-past twelve, sir!"

Then, having carefully drawn to the curtains so as to prevent even a stray beam of light stealing out, he turned up the gas. A very perfect servant he was!

"I had quite a shock to-day, sir," he whispered, as he took a dark suit from a chest of drawers, "but I am thankful to say that my apprehensions were groundless."

"Oh, indeed?"

"Yes, sir, I was talking to Banks, the gardener at the Woodlands, when I caught sight of a figure that recalled most unpleasant reminiscences; but I ascertained that it was Penworthy, the landscape gardener, who is responsible for the alterations to Mr. Mansfield's garden, but, at the time, sir, he reminded me most uncomfortably of Crump, formerly chief inspector of Scotland Yard. You know this Penworthy, sir?"

Revelle gave vent to a low laugh.

"Of course, yes! A most homely, harmless little fellow."

He laughed again.

"So he reminded you of your old acquaintance, Crump, did he? That must have been painful, Railton!"

"Most painful, sir!" answered the man with a little shiver, "And I did not feel quite happy in my mind till I met my young, unsophisticated constable-friend Jackson, who is acquainted with Penworthy, and who removed the last doubt from my mind."

While speaking he had been assisting his master to dress. Revelle was wearing black clothes. A black silk scarf took

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## OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

**Our Powerful Serial.**

the place of a collar. Railton helped him into an Inverness coat.

"The keys, Railton!"

The valet slipped a hand into his pocket, and drew out a small wash-leather bundle. Taking it from him, Revelle unrolled it, and examined a number of newly-made keys. Railton had obtained wax impressions of the principal locks at The Towers. These had been forwarded by post to a certain locksmith acquaintance of his.

"They are excellent!" muttered Revelle approvingly.

From his waistcoat pocket Railton drew out another, and very small key.

"The key of the safe, sir! It is not, as you are aware, a combination lock."

Revelle retired into his dressing-room. On his return, he carried a small hand-bag.

"And now, Railton, I think that's everything."

"Yes, sir. You know, sir, that you have my very best wishes for your complete success."

The two figures that, a few moments later, passed down the stairs, might have been ghosts, they moved so silently. Reaching a small, side gate that led out into the garden, Railton unlocked it, and slipped back the bolts. Revelle, his coat-collar upturned, his soft felt hat drawn down over his eyes, passed out. Railton locked the door behind him.

Revelle, as he walked away rapidly and silently, was conscious of a thrill of exhilaration. He was confident of success; perhaps he would have felt less confident had he seen the shadow that had risen up from out the shrubs behind him, and was creeping along in his wake, every whit as silently as himself—the man whom, but a brief while ago, he had described as a most homely, harmless, little fellow. A few yards along the main road; then he climbed a stile, and struck across fields. After nearly an hour's sharp walking, Normanhurst Towers loomed out, grim and indistinct, through the darkness. The ghostly silence that prevailed was only broken by a distant clock striking the half-hour.

Thanks to Railton's plans and his own personal knowledge, Revelle was completely informed concerning the interior of the house. He made his way round to a side-door. A moment's pause to listen, then, having taken from his bag a small lantern, he lighted it with a silent match. One of the well-greased keys turned the lock. But the door was bolted on the inside.

Revelle smiled softly to himself. He had come prepared for this contingency. He carried in his bag a little invention of Benny's, unpatented, in the shape of a long, thin piece of steel, with a hinge in the centre and a prong at the end.

Thrusting it under the door, he pressed a spring attached to the instrument, and the prong, rising up, caught the knob of the bolt within. By pushing the instrument along, he was enabled to draw back the bolt. The door was now unlocked and unbolted; but there was still a heavy chain to be dealt with. Silently opening the door a couple of inches, he thrust in the steel instrument, and switched the chain off its hook. Once within, he closed to the door, and made his way into the great, oak-panelled hall. He was absolutely calm and self-possessed.

Up the broad, oak staircase, he stole silently as a shadow. Reaching the landing above, he paused for a moment to listen. No sound broke the stillness. Half-way down a long corridor, he paused again outside a door, drew out a key, unlocked it. The silence with which the man worked was truly marvellous. The room entered was a dressing-room, a door leading from it into the bedroom beyond. In one corner stood a small, but massive safe. From the next room came the sound of breathing. The safe contained the Normanhurst jewels. Revelle, holding the lantern in a grip firm and steady as a rock, fitted the key that Railton had obtained for him into the lock. The next moment, the door swung back on its well-oiled hinges. No sound escaped his lips as his eyes fell on the glittering gems that lined the shelves—tiaras, pendants, bracelets, and necklaces, thousands of pounds' worth of heirlooms. A few seconds later, his bag was full.

Everything had been carefully thought out. Before leaving the room, Revelle locked the safe. Outside, he relocked the door. Once outside the Towers, he behaved with the same deliberation. Having relocked the side door, he put back the bolt by means of the steel instrument. Except for the hanging chain, which it was impossible to replace, and which might have been left unfastened through the carelessness of a servant, he had left behind him no trace to show that the house had been broken into. It was quite possible, he told himself, that the robbery might remain undiscovered for two or three days. It was characteristic of the man's coolness that, before extinguishing the lantern, he first lighted a cigarette by it. The bag he carried contained enough to keep him going like a gentleman for a matter of four or five years. The morrow's evening would see the jewels handed over to Masters, who would leave the same night for Holland. The cheques that he would be presently paying into his bank, would arouse no suspicion, coming from a well-known commission agent. He himself was known to be a racing man. Only two shadows marred the rosy sky of the future—Esther and Benny! He was not given to throw up the sponge; but he despaired now of winning Esther. He could not altogether shake off the haunting thought that Benny might be meditating treachery.

But he was, even now, reckoning without his host in the shape of a little man who was not more than ten yards away from him.

It was close upon four o'clock when Railton, standing behind the side-door at The Firs, heard a faint, scratching sound outside. Noiselessly opening the door, he admitted his master.

"All well, sir?" questioned the valet.

"Quite," came back the low answer, "perfect! Not a hitch from beginning to end."

"Will you allow me, sir, to offer you my heartiest congratulations!"

"Thank you, Railton. 'Pon my word, I do really feel rather pleased with myself to-night!"

Shortly after the two men had passed upstairs, a shadow stole out from the grounds of The Firs; then a second; then a third.

"An eventful night," whispered a voice, "and—I must give the devil his due—a most skilful and masterly performance. I think, gentlemen, it is quite safe for us to return to Woodbine Cottage for two or three hours. Given a little more rope, and I think that Mr. Seaton Revelle will most effectually hang himself. No train stops at Warham before eight o'clock."

"Well, how are we this morning?" said the doctor, as he was ushered by Railton into Revelle's bed-room.

"Miles better, doctor. That medicine of yours has worked wonders. I slept like a top, and woke up with all my aches and pains gone. I'm very grateful to you. I've an appointment in town this evening, and I should have been awfully disappointed if I couldn't have kept it."

"This place," said the doctor presently, "is getting very popular with artists. I passed a fellow outside here as I came along and he was making a very presentable sketch of The Firs."

"Ah, yes. It's a favourite subject. No end of fellows paint it. Then, doctor, there's no objection to me going up to town?"

"No; if you feel up to it, certainly not!"

When the doctor left The Firs, the artist was still hard at work upon his sketch. It was one of Crump's visitors.

"Railton," said Revelle, "nothing has been missed at The Towers yet?"

"Evidently not, sir; or we should have heard something to that effect from the doctor."

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"When the loss is discovered, it will cause a considerable amount of sensation."

"Yes, sir; and will be most interesting to see what theories will be advanced by the police."

Railton paused for a moment.

"Pardon me, sir, but might I ask if you parted on friendly terms with Mr. Faversham? I was considerably startled when you informed me that he had withdrawn from this venture."

Revelle glanced rather sharply at his servant. Was he anxious, too?

"Of course, sir, I never saw very much of Mr. Faversham; but I do not think that he was very favourably disposed towards me; perhaps, in consequence of that, I am somewhat prejudiced against him; but I presume he is absolutely to be relied upon?"

"I think so, Railton," he replied slowly. "In any case, I shall be seeing him some time this evening, and shall be having a talk with him."

"I am glad to hear that, sir! And at what time do you think you will be leaving for London?"

"I don't know—some time this evening."

"There's a very good train at six thirty-five, sir."

"That will do. I want you to take a telegram for me."

The telegram was addressed to Masters, Chancery Lane, and made an appointment for that evening. Railton, on his way to the post office, passed the artist, and glanced over his shoulder at his sketch. It really was remarkably good. At Scotland Yard it was firmly believed that, though up to the present he had been unsuccessful in his efforts, Inspector Winton would achieve the distinction of having a picture hung in the Royal Academy.

Reaching the village post-office, Railton copied the message on to a telegraph form. The pencil he wrote with was hard, and sharply pointed. He was still writing, when a man entered and bought some stamps. When Railton moved away from the box-like place reserved for the writing of telegrams, the man stepped up to it, bent down, and seemed to be writing a message.

"Mr. Crump's conclusions," said Inspector Wilcox, when, a few moments after Railton, he left the post office, "look like being confirmed in a remarkable manner."

In his pocket he carried a telegraph form. It bore a legible impression of the message dispatched by Railton. When he reached Woodbine Cottage, Crump was reading for a second time a letter from Esther that had arrived by the first post. She was, she wrote, over so much better. So much so that she was travelling up to London with her father, who was obliged to come to town on business. He had tried to dissuade her; but she had insisted. Of course, Mr. Crump would understand why they were not coming to The Woodlands. They were going to take rooms at the Hotel Royal. Would it be possible for him to come and see them there? She longed to see him. There was much else besides.

"It is a brave letter," said the little man to himself, "they will reach London some time to-day. No, I'm afraid to-day will be impossible for me! Ah, Wilcox!"

"Mr. Revelle," said the inspector, producing a telegraph form, "leaves this evening for London by the six thirty-five train, and has made an appointment to meet Lewis Masters at eight thirty. Mr. Crump, it looks as if your conclusions are going to work out like a mathematical equation."

Crump took the telegraph form, and glanced at it. He realised.

"Wilcox," he said, his eyes twinkling approbation, "you've done a very smart piece of work this morning!"

"Winton is still sketching near The Firs!"

"Good! We, too, Wilcox, will be travelling up by the six thirty-five train. I hope you don't disapprove of my policy, Wilcox; but not only do I want to bag the lot of them, including Mr. Masters; but I want conclusive proof of Scarsdale's innocence. And it is this man Masters from whom I expect to obtain it!"

*(The result of Mr. Crump's journey to London will be told next week.)*


## Strange Ways of Sleeping.

The Chinese and Japanese sleep on a hard wooden pillow. The Laplander sleeps in a bag of reindeer skin. Russians in winter sleep on stone slabs resting on stoves. Most people sleep soundly for several hours at a stretch. Where this sleep cannot be obtained, depend upon it the digestive organs and liver are wrong, and that a course of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans should be taken without delay.

Mrs. W. Davidson, of Dunhead Farm, Monikie, near Dundee, says: "Indigestion and biliousness robbed me of sound sleep and made both day and night miserable. What with a splitting headache, pains across the shoulders, and extremely severe pains in the sides of my stomach, accompanied by giddiness and general debility, I have suffered to an extent which no one can imagine. A doctor in Alyth once told me that the biliousness and indigestion were of too long standing to be cured. Then, one of my sons heard of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness. I tried a box, and after a few doses I got a night's undisturbed sleep—the first for twenty years! As I took the beans I got better and better, and now I am glad to say I am quite cured." Bile Beans are stocked by all chemists at one and three half-pence or two and nine a box. They cure sleeplessness, headache, female ailments, debility, anæmia, indigestion, and all liver and kidney ailments. Upon receipt of price you may obtain a box from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, E.C., post free. Mention this to sleepless friends.

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# If She Had Been Faithful.

**Telling of a Sacrifice for Love and its Reward.**

Two of the prison warders meeting in the corridor stopped for a moment.

"Doesn't one of your men finish this week?"

"Yes, this is his cell," said the other warder, tapping the wall. "He's due out to-morrow morning, but you'd think he was in for life to judge by his face. I fancy he's fretting about something. Look here—quietly."

They advanced to the movable panel and slid it silently back. The prisoner sat upon the edge of his bed, gazing towards a narrow, barred window, through which a sunbeam slanted across the floor. His face was pale and listless, his head drooped in a sort of hopeless patience.

But all the time his brain was working, and fretting in a very maelstrom of despair. The knowledge that he was to be released the following morning gave him neither pain nor pleasure. They might open the doors and send him into the world again, but they could not rescue him from his own thoughts. Nobody could do that now.

If only she had remained faithful—he had taken her brother's guilt—he had wrecked his own honour in the eyes of the world, and for what—his thoughts plodded wearily back to their starting point. If she had remained faithful he could have borne it all, he thought wistfully.

But neither letter nor message had come from her—she was like the rest—she had deserted him.

The church bells ringing for evensong, crashed brutally into his reflections and drove home the hopeless lesson he had been learning so long—a year—two years—he scarcely knew how long he had been in prison. His despair found utterance at last. He stretched his arms passionately towards the window and burst into a wild fit of weeping that shook him from head to foot.

"It's for a lass, I reckon," whispered one of the warders gently. "Come away, Jack, 'tisn't fair to watch him, and we can't help."

* * * * * *

The next morning opened out clear and bright, with just sufficient breeze to keep the air cool. A little rain which had fallen during the early morning, had cleaned the streets, and the warm sunshine soon dried them.

When Will Seddon came out he felt dazzled for a moment. The keen light beat full upon him, as though it would expose his haggard face and general look of neglect and loneliness. A man approached as though he wished to speak, but the other shrank back and hurried towards a side street. The very idea of companionship was inexpressibly distasteful to him. The world had cast him away, had deserted him.

A passing cab driver pulled up his horse suddenly in obedience to a signal from the fare. The animal fell back upon its haunches, striking fire from the stones.

As for Seddon, he raised his arms weakly to defend himself, and then, finding he was still unhurt, went uncomplainingly forward.

But at the same moment a girl of about twenty-three or four years of age, opened the door of the cab, and jumped lightly to the ground. In a moment she had reached him.

He turned round and gazed at her with a look in which amazement, hope, fear, and doubt were all blended. The phrase that had haunted him for two years rose slowly in his mind.

"Oh, if only you had remained faithful," he muttered, with a sob, "I could have borne it all."

"But, Will, I have been faithful, and I never doubted your innocence, although I only knew a few days ago who was the guilty one. I had brain fever during your trial. When I wrote to you afterwards my mother intercepted the letters, and destroyed them."

"*She* intercepted them?"

"She thought you were guilty."

"When I taxed your brother with his guilt, he said the knowledge would break his mother's heart, and then, for her sake and yours, I took his place," he said simply.

"He went to Australia after the trial. Nothing seemed to prosper with him, and he sank lower and lower, and died there in poverty and loneliness a few months ago. He wrote to mother and confessed everything."

"And is your mother——"

"She is at home waiting for us." She led him gently towards the cab. "She has nearly cried herself to death about you, so you'll be kind to her for my sake."

"I can feel kindly towards anybody now," he said wistfully.

They took their places in the cab. Her head sank upon his shoulder, and then to his own great astonishment he found himself whispering words which he thought he had forgotten for ever. The shadows rolled swiftly from his mind, and sorrow and despair fled before the new born happiness. To have complete faith in just one person, this is half the battle of life.

**Wal Frank.**

*NOTE.*

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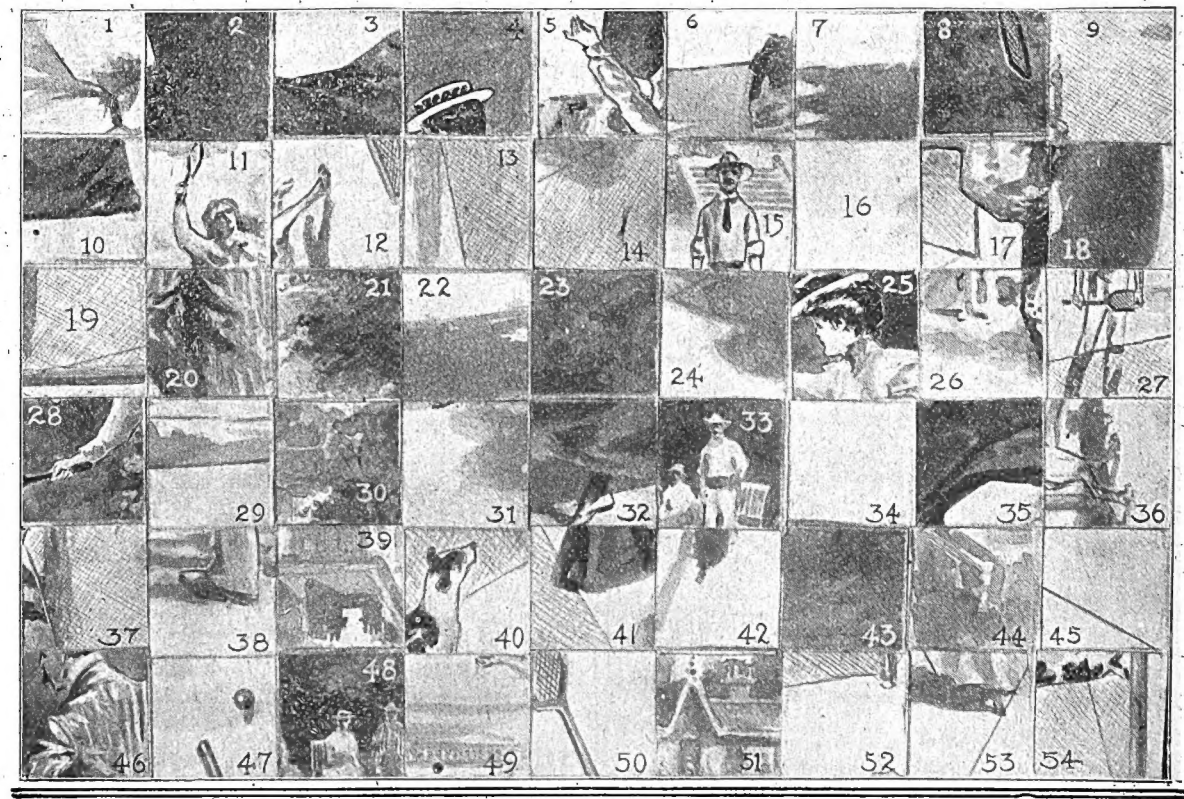


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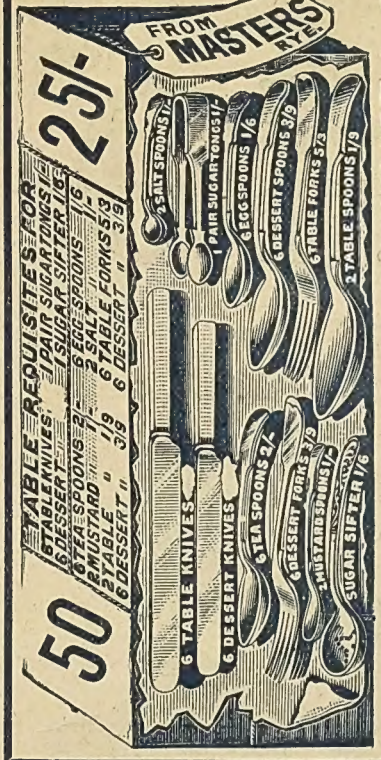


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